UNDER THE SHADOW OF KHOMEINISM:
DEMOCRACY'S PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY
IRAN

(Spine title: Under the Shadow of Khomeinism)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Mojtaba S.A. <u>Mahdavi</u>

Graduate Program
in
Political Science

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

© Mojtaba S.A. Mahdavi 2006

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION**

Supervisor

_____
Dr. Salim Mansur

Supervisor Committee


_____
Dr. Bruce Morrison

_____

Examiners

_____
Dr. Andres Perez

_____
Dr. Douglas Long

_____
Dr. Joseph Lella

_____
Dr. Saeed Rahnema


The thesis by

**Mojtaba S.A. Mahdavi**


entitled:

**Under the Shadow of Khomeinism: Democracy's Problems and Prospects in Post-Revolutionary Iran**


is accepted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy


Date _____

_____
Chair of the Thesis Examination Board


ii

# ABSTRACT

Iran's third wave of engagement with democracy has experienced a number of high and low points, fulfillments and failures. It began with the Revolution (1977-1979), interrupted by the post-revolutionary politics, revived in the 1997 May Movement, and was reversed in 2005. The politics, personality, and perspective of Ayatollah Khomeini, identified as *Khomeinism*, have been central to Iran's third wave and reverse wave. Ayatollah Khomeini's personality became the symbol of the 1979 Revolution. His politics, personality, and perspectives became the substance of the Islamic Republic; and now his institutional and intellectual legacy is identified as the major obstacle in the further evolution of Iranian democracy.

This study proposes, contrary to what appears on surface, that contemporary Iran is capable of democratic transition and remains substantially if incompletely prepared for such a radical transformation. To evaluate this proposition and to understand the present picture of regime transition, I propose to examine democratic and anti-democratic movements in Iran over the past century. This study is an attempt to provide new insights into the distinctive case of Iran's post-revolutionary politics where complex interactions between structural constraints and strategic decisions have generated surprising openings and have also turned some distinct opportunities into lost momentum. The focus is upon the 1979 Revolution, the Khomeinist transformation of the post-revolutionary state, and the influence of these events on the democratic prospects of reformism since 1997.

Keywords: Democratization, Iran, Khomeinism, *Velayat-e Faqih*, Structure, Agency

iii

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My largest debt is to my supervisor, Dr. Salim Mansur, for agreeing to supervise this study, carefully reading and revising my drafts, and offering useful advice and encouragement along the way. I must next express my appreciation for the invaluable advice and relentless support I received from Dr. Bruce Morrison. Thanks are also extended to Dr. Andres Perez and Dr. Richard Vernon who kindly shared their knowledge and expertise with me. The contributions of other members of the Department should not be overlooked either; their encouragement and assistance made these years most challenging and rewarding. Last but not least, my sincerest gratitude must be extended to my family and friends; special thanks to my parents and my wife, Shahnaz, for their love and continued encouragement.

# TABLE OF CONTEXT

**List of Tables**                                                     **Page number**

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Statement of the Problem

Iran at the beginning of the twenty first century has yet to achieve the "rule of law" (*hokomat-e ghanoun*) resting upon the people's will. Pre-revolutionary Iran was governed by dynastic principles of sultanism and post-revolutionary Iran is ruled by a clerical polity created by the politics, personality, and perspectives of Ayatollah Khomeini: *Khomeinism*. Hence, contemporary Iran, on surface appearances, seems to be a society bound to despotic traditions, a patrimonial political culture, and autocratic institutions; a society in which old forms of despotism are routinely replaced by new types of absolutism. From this elitist perspective, the Shah or the Sheikh, Zellolah or Ayatollah, symbolizes modern Iran: Iran is not a democracy because it never really fought for it, or because democracy was never a realistic prospect. Iran's post-revolutionary polity has reinforced this view since a modern popular revolution brought about a clerical polity anchored in Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurist). This study is an attempt to challenge such a simplistic and ahistorical standpoint, which misperceives Iran's century-old quest for democracy. It holds that Iran's failure to democratization is comprehensible but incorrigible, and that its prospects for the future are better than is commonly imagined. Modern Iran has experienced a number of critical junctures that could have established the universal rule of law and popular power in a manner consistent with Iran's unique heritage. The 1979 Revolution and the 1997 reform movement were two cases in which the potential for democracy was available but never actualized. This is not to suggest that Iran is engaged

in an oversimplified transition to democracy. Post-revolutionary Iranian politics yields many narratives, and many potentials, some of which point in quite other directions. The argument here, however, is that an examination of the Iranian case from the standpoint of democratization can yield fascinating and challenging new insights about what has been and remains possible. This study is thus an attempt to provide new perspective on the distinctive case of Iran's post-revolutionary politics, where the complex interactions between the structural forces and strategic decisions have generated surprising openings and have also turned such distinctive opportunities into lost momentum.

In the 1979 Revolution, human agency triumphed over structural constraints in the overthrow of the Shah's autocratic regime. But such a triumph was full of contradictions. The Revolution brought a new regime with a new constitution founded on the exceptionalism created by the politics, personality, and perspectives of Ayatollah Khomeini, *Khomeinism*. Under *Khomeinism* the rule of law was not universal since the office of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of jurist) stood outside the constitution. The struggle within the Islamic Republic in Khatami's reformist government represented the efforts of the in-system reformists to bind the office of *velayat-e faqih* to the constitution. But the reformists failed, and the conservative-hardliners consolidated their autocratic rule in June 2005. Paradoxically, the 2005 reversal coincided with the centennial of the 1905 Constitutional Revolution, a Revolution that divided Iran into a pre-modern and modern era and marked Iran's first major attempt to establish the "rule of law" and replace arbitrary despotic rule. This paradoxical coincidence suggests that Iran, after a "century of revolution"[1] and reform, has yet to achieve the rule of law and a procedural

---

[1] See John Foran, ed., *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

political democracy. This coincidence also raises a significant question as to whether contemporary Iran will materialize such a century-old potentiality. Why would a reformist government be replaced by an extreme autocratic polity? What social and political factors inside Iran make the Islamic Republic strong and Iran's democratic forces weak?

This study proposes that the potential for democracy in the post-Khomeini period was available within certain limits imposed by the socio-political context and the elite's strategic decisions. Strong linkages between elite reformists and civil society would have made likely too strong a successful transition to democracy, but a combination of socio-political constraints and elite misjudgements made the meeting of elite reformists and societal forces problematic. More specifically, the strong shadow of *Khomeinism* over the post-Khomeini period hindered a democratic transition, since the elite reformists were bound by the institutional and intellectual legacy of *Khomeinism*. Institutionally, the absolute rule of the office of *velayat-e faqih* undermined the power of the republican institutions of the Islamic Republic, and turned the elite reformists into footmen of the state. Intellectually, the elite reformists lived under the strong shadow of *Khomeinism* as they redefined concepts of the rule of law, civil society, and democracy in line with Ayatollah Khomeini's discourse in which people enjoy only a limited and inchoate subjectivity. The elite reformists were unable and unwilling to establish a strong link with civil society and failed to make certain strategic decisions because they were bound by the institutional arrangement and the intellectual legacy of *Khomeinism*. Yet, I will argue that Khatami's moment was a lost opportunity for Iran's democratic transition because the reform was rooted in civil society. Civil society actively and consistently supported

the reformist government, while the reformists never trusted the forces of civil society. Khatami's moment was a lost opportunity for Iranian civil society: an active civil society was available, but the political will for democracy was not. It is in this context that I propose, contrary to surface appearances, that contemporary Iran has been capable of democratizing and remains substantially if incompletely prepared for such a radical transformation.

## 2. Iran's three Waves of Democratization

In order to understand the present picture of regime transition, I will examine Iran's democratic and anti-democratic waves over the past century. History, as Collins put it, is "the instrument by which structures are discovered invisible to the unaided eye."[2] A quick historical review would reveal the ways in which contemporary Iran is and is not prepared for democratic transition. It would also contribute to understanding the long-term effects of Iran's foundational moments and historically "critical junctures"[3] in making the complex events that together represent the Iranian effort to establish a democratic "rule of law."

Broadly speaking, Iran's democratic demands over the past century have proceeded in three major waves, which coincided with the parallel global waves of democracy. It is important to note that this study has no intention to establishing simple causal relations between the so-called "global waves of democracy" and the Iranian experience. The coincidence does not refer to the causal explanation. Nonetheless, one

---

[2] R. Collins, *Macrohistory: Essays in the Sociology of the Long Run* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 1.
[3] For further discussions about the impact of historical critical junctures on regime transition, see Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labour Movements, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), chapter 1.

cannot ignore the impact of external factors in three waves of democratic experiences in modern Iran. Moreover, this study acknowledges that scholars are divided on the historical interpretations and theoretical value of the so-called "global waves of democracy."[4] Hence, in this study the "wave metaphor" points to a number of high and low points in Iran's quest for democracy; it *only* directs our attention to the bigger historical picture beyond the current democratic demands in Iran.

The global "democratic and antidemocratic waves," as John Markoff put it, "did not just begin in the 1960's and 1970's but two hundred years earlier."[5] For Robert Dahl, democratization began in 1776 with the American Revolution.[6] For Samuel Huntington, the global waves of democratization began in the early nineteen century. He identifies three major waves of democratization. The first wave (1826-1926) was the longest one; it, however, came to an end by the "reverse wave" (1922-1942) exemplified in the rise of fascism. The second wave of democratization (1943-1962) increased the number of democracies in the world, but was followed by another reverse wave (1958-1975) and the collapse of democracies. The third wave of democratization (1974-present) has been faster and broader than two previous waves.[7]

Iran's first experience of democracy (1820's-1911) came during the first wave (1826-1926), as the British Industrial Revolution, the 1776 American Revolution, the 1789 French Revolution, and the 1830's revolutionary changes in Europe spread the

---

[4] The *Third Wave* has been criticized from different angles; this study, however, adopts the general theme of the third wave. For some critical comments, see Anthony Giddens, ed., *The Global Third Wave Debates* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (London: John Hopkins University, 1999), pp. 24-24; T.L. Karl, "The Hybrid Regimes of Central America" *Journal of Democracy*, (1995) 6, 3, pp. 72-86.

[5] John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change*, p. 2.

[6] Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 234.

[7] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

winds of change. In Asia, the *Meiji* Revolution in Japan, the 1905 Russian Revolution, and the reforms (*tanzimat*) in the Ottoman Empire were of similar character. They all brought the ideals of modern civilization and the ideas of progress, freedom and the rule of law into modern politics. A group of Iranian intellectuals and a number of Iran's reformist elites were touched by the global spread of such new and novel ideas. The quest for change, however, was not all about ideas. Two humiliating defeats in wars with Russia (1812 and 1828) escalated the quest for change; this change was primarily directed towards the modernization of the army. It was in this context that Iran's first wave began with two top-down reforms initiated by crown prince Abbas Mirza (1789-1833) and Prime Minister Amir Kabir (d. 1852), and was followed by two social movements: the 1891 Tobacco Movement and the 1905 Constitutional Revolution. Iran was the first country in the region to experience a constitutional revolution and achieve a modern constitution. Iran's first wave sought to establish Constitutional (*Mashrooteh*) politics and revolved around "One Word" (*Yek Kalameh*):[8] Law (*Ghanoun*). But in 1911 the arbitrary-despotic rule returned, the revolution came to an end, and the first and long reverse wave (1911-1950) put an end to Iran's first and short-lived constitutional period.

Iran also participated in the second wave of democracy (1950-1953) in the form of a post-colonial movement similar to other Third World nationalist movements after the Second World War.[9] But Iran's second wave also proved to be more: it was a democratic movement parallel to those in the second global wave of democratization. Like India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru, Iran sought to achieve full

---

[8] This refers to the nominal essay published by Mirza Yusef Khan Mostashar ad-dowleh before the 1905 Iran's Constitutional Revolution.

[9] The second wave of democracy in Iran can be considered little longer if turning point is the removal of Reza Shah in 1941; the fall of the dictator brought about a degree of pluralism and party politics. It is, therefore, more appropriate to limit this period to the Mosaddeq's era (1950-1953).

independence and parliamentary democracy. This agenda was clearly set by Mohammad Mosaddeq (1882-1966), a man who captured a moment in Iranian history to nationalize the oil industry and make Iran a constitutional parliamentary democracy. Iran's oil-nationalization movement influenced nationalism in countries such as Egypt under President Nasser. But Iran's own experience of full independence and parliamentary democracy remained far from a success. The 1953 coup put an abrupt end to Iran's second wave and marked the beginning of Iran's second reverse wave (1953-1977).[10]

Similar to the global third wave, Iran's third wave (1977-present) has been much broader in scope and more complex in nature than the two previous waves. Iran's third wave experienced a number of high and low points, fulfilments and failures. It began with the Revolution (1977-1979), was interrupted by the post-revolutionary politics, and was revived in the 1997 May Movement, again to be reversed in 2005. The politics, personality, and perspective of Ayatollah Khomeini, *Khomeinism*, has been central to Iran's third wave and reverse wave. Ayatollah Khomeini's personality became the symbol of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and became the substance of the Islamic Republic; now his legacy is identified as the major obstacle to the further evolution of Iranian democracy.

The 1979 popular revolutionary upheaval put an end to the Shah's sultanistic regime and brought an opportunity for a democratic transition under a short-lived interim government. But the opportunity was lost a few months later, and the revolutionary transition from the Shah's regime institutionalized a new form of autocratic regime. The new regime, the Islamic Republic of Iran, continued to exist after Ayatollah Khomeini

---

[10] For the period of twenty-five years, with the exception of the brief period of 1960-63 uprising, the country experienced no popular movement.

died in 1989; Ayatollah Khomeini died, but *Khomeinism* survived. The year Ayatollah Khomeini died the state he founded was firmly in place without any indication of democratic transition. But 1989 coincided with the rising global "third wave" of democracy. It was the year the Berlin Wall fell and Eastern Europe became liberated from left-totalitarian regimes, and then came the collapse of Soviet totalitarianism in 1991. Similarly, right-wing authoritarian regimes in Chile in 1989, Taiwan in 1988, South Korea in 1987, and the Philippines in 1986 were replaced by nominally democratic regimes. The coincidence of Ayatollah Khomeini's death with the end of left-wing totalitarian and right-wing authoritarian regimes was ironic, as people under such regimes acquired freedom in the making of their democratic societies. But Iranians – despite a century of struggle for freedom – became isolated and imprisoned in a new and distinctive form of autocratic state.

The post-revolutionary Iranian regime was more than simply totalitarian rule resistant to democratic transition. The Khomeinist state had institutionalized a complex and distinctive polity with a constitution that simultaneously sought its legitimacy in religious-clerical ideas and secular-republican institutions. This Janus-faced quality of the Islamic Republic provided key ingredients for democratization, since it opened up the space for the elite's factional politics and a degree of civil society participation. As such, twenty five years after the 1979 Revolution and a decade after Ayatollah Khomeini's death, the children and grandchildren of the revolution began to voice demands for democracy. Iran's 1997 May Movement brought a reformist government into power, setting the stage for a transition to democracy. But the movement for democracy was interrupted, and hardliners took full power in 2005. This reversal brings us to the central

theme of the present study: if contemporary Iran was favourably situated for democratic transition, why did the social and political forces fail to bring it about? What structural and agential factors contributed to Iran's democratic deficit?

### 3. Political Voluntarism versus Socio-Historical Determinism

"Chicken-or-egg" controversies in the natural sciences are common. In social science one of these controversies has taken place over the issue of agency and structure, political voluntarism and structuralism, short-termism and long-term socio-historical determinism. The present study keeps an equal distance from vulgar voluntarism and structural determinism to examine Iran's interrupted democratic transitions. This dialectical approach combines elements of voluntarism and structuralism. This is not to suggest that there is a wall between structural and agential factors, nor to suggest a simplistic remedy, nor a mechanical mixture which would combine the two approaches in a serial fashion. It instead introduces a dialectical approach in which choices of agents and structures mutually reinforce each other. This is to avoid the oversimplified and false differentiation between agency and structure. Structure and agency are simply analytical tools. We are, as Anthony Giddens reminds us, "carriers" of the structural forces within which we operate. Structures – as institutionalized sets of social relationships – act through us; they are "in us". We also act through structures which are of our making.[11]

This dialectical approach provides us with a useful theoretical tool in understanding the complex picture of conflict between political voluntarism in favour of democracy, and structural constraints resistant to democratization in Iran. It reveals the

---

[11] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986)

complex relations between the dynamics of democratization and the socio-political pre-conditions required for a successful democratic transition. This study offers an operational definition of structure and agency. The structural factors will be measured by three power structures of *state, class,* and *transnational power*: the nature of the Iranian state (political level), the extent of societal development (socio-economic level), and the global structure of power (international level). The agential factors will be examined in terms of the leadership capability (individual level), the organizational arrangements (institutional level), and the intellectual discourse (cultural/ideological level).

### *3.1. Modernization and Islamization: Mixed results in favour of and against democratization*

Global forces of modernity and the local politics of modernization produced some mixed results in Iran. They helped and hindered democratic structures, and both empowered and hindered democratic forces. On one level, the more Iran has become modern, the more it has been able to overcome a number of significant structural constraints resistant to democratization. On another level, the complex experience of modernization produced a new set of structural constraints against democratization.

Iran's first wave was interrupted by three structural factors: the traditional nature of the state (arbitrary-sultanism), an extremely low level of societal development (extensive illiteracy and poverty, tiny middle class and working class, and a large rural-landlord-tribal community with strong ties with clerics), and the colonial structure of international politics (Iran's semi-colonial status). However, the three agential factors on the side of democratic forces (institutions, leadership, and ideas) were extremely weak, as they were unable to communicate with their social constituency since they lacked

grassroots social and political institutions. No effective charismatic leadership succeeded in filling this institutional gap. Hence, the human agency failed to institutionalize the political achievements of the 1905 Constitutional Revolution.

Iran in the second wave was no longer a semi-colony; it was a nation-state with strong elements of patrimonial sultanism. Like the political structure, the socio-economic structure was critical and complex because the autocratic modernization under the Pahlavi regime had mixed results. The illiteracy rate was lower and the size of the urban class was larger than during the first wave. Tribal leaders were no longer social forces of autocratic rule as the Shah sought to establish a modern centralized state and fought tribalism. Yet landlordism and clericalism remained two powerful pillars of authoritarianism. On the international level, the Cold War played a part in the anti-democratic wave, and a joint American-British coup put an end to this phase of democratic movement in Iran. The democratic forces enjoyed stronger leadership, relatively better political institutions, and a comparatively stronger social base, though not strong enough to overcome structural obstacles. Political voluntarism once again gave way to structural constraints.

Iran in the third wave was freed from a long-time structural obstacle to democratization: the 1979 Revolution put an end to sultanism but produced a new obstacle in the form of a modern clerical autocratic polity identified as *Khomeinism*. The global forces of modernity and the local politics of modernization paradoxically contributed to the rise and success of *Khomeinism*. After the 1953 coup the convergence of the Shah's regime with the West and the regime's conservative-autocratic modernization created new structural changes. The state gradually transformed into a

modernizing autocratic sultanistic regime. The contradiction between the regime's political conservatism and its socio-economic modernization produced mixed results. On one level, the process of modernization strengthened the modern educated middle class and weakened landlords. On another level, autocratic modernization awakened socio-political demands. The modern middle class was troubled by the Shah's personal rule and his brutal autocracy. The traditional middle class (the merchant *bazaari* and the *ulama* or clerics) was disenchanted by the Shah's cultural and economic modernization/Westernization. Disenchantment energized the traditional middle class and the urban poor, and pushed them to the forefront of the revolutionary movement. The Cold War and the Shah's close ties with the West helped the regime to demolish modern nationalist and secular opposition, but religious institutions remained relatively safe. It was in this context that the charismatic leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, the strengths of religious institutions, and the currency of Islamic militant discourse provided a viable alternative to the Shah's regime: *Khomeinism*. The 1979 Revolution brought into power a modern clerical autocratic polity that interrupted democratic transition. Like revolution, the politics of *Khomeinism* and Islamization from above had mixed results. It awakened civil society and empowered various social forces. The rise of Iran's 1997 May Movement (2nd Khordad 1376) is a case in point where the unintended consequence of the Khomeinist rule energized human agency on the side of the democratic wave. Yet the fall of President Khatami's reformist government indicates that once again political voluntarism failed in transforming Iran into a democracy.

Since in contemporary Iran significant numbers of structural constraints that existed in the two previous waves are weak, it remains capable of democratic transition.

If this is so, what explains the recent failure of democratic transition? Was this a failure of human agency, or the resistance of structural factors?

### 3.2. Democratic Transition under Khomeinism: The Failure of Human Agency

A defeatist reading of the post-revolutionary events takes the fate of post-revolutionary politics and the unavailability of democracy as predetermined. Paradoxically, conservative trends among the regime's softliners and ultra-radicals among the opposition shared such a fatalist view. This view either overestimates the strength of structural obstacles or underestimates the potential power of human agency. This study proposes that the major obstacle to democratic transition in post-Khomeini Iran is more agential and less structural. This is not to underestimate the intensity of new structural constraints in contemporary Iran, but stress has also to be placed on the great potential of socio-political agency to overcome structural obstacles and turn them into opportunities. Put simply, the failure of President Mohammad Khatami's reformist government and the success of Iran's conservative hardliners were not inevitable; the potential for democratic transition was available.

The potential for a transition to democracy was available for a few months after the 1979 Revolution. This opportunity was lost when *Khomeinism* was consolidated in the summer of 1981. A successful transition to democracy under the revolutionary and charismatic leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini was unlikely, but grew after Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989. Two factors explain the potential for a transition to democracy in post-Khomeini Iran: first, the changing nature of the post-Khomeini state; secondly, the dynamics of civil society. It is true that the structure of the state in the post-Khomeini era hindered a democratic transition. The elite hardliners hold the lion's share of power

due to the institutional arrangement of the Islamic Republic. The strong shadow of Ayatollah Khomeini on post-Khomeini politics hindered a democratic transition, but it is also true that the post-Khomeini state was transformed into a post-charismatic or post-totalitarian polity and experienced elite factionalism. The ambiguous and ironic legacy of *Khomeinism* provided the elite softliners with a considerable degree of political manoeuvre. This ambiguous legacy enhanced, to use Daniel Brumberg's phrase, the "dissonant institutionalization"[12] in the structure of the state and offered different notions of what the Islamic Republic should be. The intensity of the elite's factionalism weakened Ayatollah Khomeini's totalitarian shadow. But the elite softliners were both unable and unwilling to exploit this opportunity because they were bound to the institutional and intellectual legacy of *Khomeinism*. The second potential was a societal factor. Iranian civil society in the post-Khomeini era transformed into a post-charismatic and post-war era. The dynamics of civil society in post-Khomeini Iran was due to radical demographic change, a gradual transformation from a revolutionary to a post-revolutionary discourse, and the unintended consequences of war and Islamization from above. After Ayatollah Khomeini's death the state was no longer a "one-man show" and civil society experienced radical structural change. Iran under *Khomeinism* after Khomeini became more capable of democratization.

The uneven socio-economic structure of the Republic was certainly another obstacle. Oil-rents and the broker-mercantile economy contributed to the domination of a new political class whose political hegemony and economic benefits went hand in hand. The domination of this new class, the main support of the hardliners, resulted in

---

[12] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

socioeconomic injustice, structural discrimination and corruption. But the softliners neither challenged the ascendancy of this class, nor did they talk about this with the people, who ultimately turned their back on the softliners.

The global structure of power was equally important. After 11 September 2001, President George W. Bush announced a new phase in American foreign policy by naming Iran as one among the three states of the "Axis of Evil", and the policy of "regime change" and its implementation in Iran's two neighbouring countries (Afghanistan and Iraq) put the reformist elites in a weak position. The hardliners exploited the situation on the basis of national security undermining reforms. But, the reformists had already lost an opportunity when former U.S. President Bill Clinton explored establishing relations with Iran's reformist government. His Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, acknowledged the American involvement in the 1953 coup and implicitly apologised for America's behaviour. The regime's softliners lacked strong and experienced leadership capable of making strategic decisions and turning external structural obstacles into opportunities. Hence, like the previous waves, the political voluntarism of the softliners failed to overcome structural constraints impeding democratic transition. This failure was not inevitable.

The post-Khomeini Khomeinist state was neither a democratic nor a totalitarian regime; it contains a mixture of "post-totalitarian" and "authoritarian" features. Like authoritarian regimes, to use Juan Linz's definition, the Khomeinist state holds "limited" but "non-responsible political pluralism", "distinctive mentalities" without a comprehensive monolithic ideology, occasional but not "intensive political mobilization" in which elites "exercise power from within formally ill-defined, but actually quite

predictable, limits."[13] The Khomeinist state remains, to use Alfred Stepans conceptual category, an "*early*-post-totalitarian state" because it still lacks sufficient diversity and autonomy within the ruling elites and sufficient strength within the democratic opposition. A transition to democracy has therefore been prevented because neither the state's softliners nor the democratic opposition were capable of playing the game of democratic transition. Put simply, the state remains at the early stage of post-totalitarianism, keeping both moderate elites and moderate opposition ineffective. Democratic institutions were weak and the movement for democracy lacked leadership. But in post-Khomeini Iran a number of structural constraints that previously impeded democratic transition are missing: colonialism, tribalism, landlordism, sultanism and charismatic totalitarianism. Iran does possess some structural opportunities in favour of democratization: a relatively active and informed civil society, limited opening for democratic discourse, a demographic change with over 70 percent educated and informed youth, the positive impact of globalization and the failure of Islamization from above, and a polity not driven by religious-revolutionary charisma. Contrary to the Shah's sultanistic regime, the republican element of the Islamic Republic has provided a limited opening to people for electing a president and the members of the parliament. And contrary to totalitarian regimes, republicanism in post-monarchy Iran provides space for factional politics and reformists can win the elections.[14]

This study proposes that the current reverse wave is largely due to significant political mistakes, miscalculations, and strategic decisions not taken by human actors.

---

[13] Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan (eds), *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1970), p. 255
[14] This is obviously not to ignore that these factions are all internal and no outsider, including liberal Muslims of Iran's Liberation Movement and other moderate Muslims, let alone secular and leftist groups were allowed to participate.

The regime's softliners underestimated the power of the public, ignored the potential capacity of civil society organizations, and failed to make a coalition with the moderate opposition. The softliners lacked enough hard power to challenge the hardliners but they failed to use the invaluable source of soft power available in civil society. They suffered from the lack of political maturity in making strategic decisions, and the absence of strong leadership skills in the transition to democracy.

## 4. The Relevance of a Single Historical Case

According to Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "much of the skepticism about the theoretical value of single historical case studies derives from the mistaken equation of a single case with a single observation."[15] The study of single historical cases is much more than single observation. Such study can develop new hypotheses and test or retest past findings in a new historical context.[16] This study is an attempt to provide new insights into the distinctive case of Iran's post-revolutionary politics and its difficulties in the transition to democracy. It will demonstrate how Iranian experience reveals the difficulties of the transition to democracy in developing countries in general, and the Muslim world in particular. More specifically, this single historical case study will look at recasting the Iranian post-revolutionary state and its prospects for democracy; it will also examine why democratic opportunities were lost. The findings are relevant to the general study of democratization because they test and retest the findings of the current literature on democratic transition with respect to Iran

---

[15] Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gains?" in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, P. 332
[16] Ibid.

The current literature on the global "third wave" of democratization deals with the transition from secular authoritarianism, sultanism, and totalitarianism in Latin America, Asia, and Southern and Eastern Europe.[17] It is difficult to fit the post-revolutionary Iranian polity into the existing typology of regimes. Iran under *Khomeinism* provides a distinct and puzzling case in two primary but interrelated ways. First, Iran, to use H. Chehabi's argument, combines elements of totalitarian, authoritarian, and democratic politics. It combines the ideological bent of totalitarian regimes with absolute supremacy over public life and the limited degree of pluralism in authoritarian regimes. Like democracies, however, it holds regular elections in which candidates advocate differing policies, and incumbents are often defeated.[18] Second, Iran is the only example of a post-traditional clerical polity[19] with a constitution that simultaneously acknowledges religious clericalism and secular republicanism, a non-secular revolutionary regime with a Janus face of authoritarian repression and democratic reform under the banner of *Khomeinism*.

The current literature on Iran's post-revolutionary politics tends to focus on two different themes. The first theme appears in the literature that examines the sociology and history of the Revolution by evaluating the "causes" of the 1979 Revolution.[20] The

---

[17] Among many works, see Samuel P. Huntington, *Third wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century* (Norman, Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Guillermo O'Donnell, Phillip Schimitter and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986).

[18] See H. E. Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," *Government and Opposition* 36.1 (2000), pp.48-70. For further discussions on democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes, see Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000).

[19] According to H. Chehabi, the Islamic Republic of Iran is the only example of a "post-traditional theocracy." See Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 48.

[20] Among many scholarly works, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic*

second theme derives from the literature that examines the "consequences" of the Revolution by emphasizing the political sociology and political history of the Islamic Republic.[21] The current literature, however, rarely explains the legacy and lasting impact of the Iranian Revolution and the Islamic Republic on Iran's "transition to democracy." This left relatively unnoticed the extent to which the causes and the consequences of the Revolution, the legacy of *Khomeinism*, contributed to Iran's democratic wave/reverse wave.[22]

This study addresses these two theoretical and empirical gaps in the literature. It will do so theoretically by attempting to account for the Islamic Republic's distinctiveness in terms of existing regime types, while also examining what the Iranian

---

*Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism, and Pseudo-modernism, 1929-1979* (New York: New York University Press, 1981); Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Misagh Parsa, States, Ideologies, and *Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of Iran, Nicaragua and the Philippines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[21] See Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Hamid Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981); Bahman Baktiari, *Parliamentary Politics in Post-revolutionary Iran* (Gainesville: Florida University Press, 1996); Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington D.C.: The Washington Institute, 1999); Houchang Chehabi, "Religion and Politics in Iran: How Theocratic is the Islamic Republic?," in *Journal of the American Art and Science*, Vol. 120, No. 3, 1991, pp. 69-91; Rohollah Khomeini, *Velayate Faqih: Hokomate Islami (The Rule of the Jurisprudence: Islamic Government)* (Tehran: Sepehr, 1978); Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002; Asghar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic*, trans. John O'Kane (London; New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997); Farzin Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Modernity* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

[22] For a few published works on this subject, see Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Saeed Rahnema, "The Left and the Struggle for Democracy in Iran," In Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004); Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi, "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of Democracy in Iran," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 52, No. 10, March 2001, Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001); H. E. Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," *Government and Opposition* 36.1 (2000) 48-70; and Said Amir Arjomand, "Democratization and the Constitutional Politics of Iran since 1997," *Polish Sociological Review* 4.136 (2001):349.

case can say to the broader debates on democratization. It will do so empirically by shifting the debate from the general explanation of the Revolution and the Republic towards the legacy and lasting impact of *Khomeinism* in Iran's democratic transition.

The methodology of this study is a combination of, to use Clifford Geertz's concept, a "thick description"[23] of *Khomeinism* and a "historical comparative study" of Iran's three waves of democratization. The "thick description" of *Khomeinism* examines the intellectual and the institutional pillars of *Khomeinism*, its legacy and complex impact on Iran's third wave. The "historical comparative study" of Iran's three waves reveals the long-term effects of Iran's century of reform and revolution to achieve democracy. It situates Iran's third wave in a larger historical context, reveals Iran's historical pathway, and provides a clear picture for the present.

The subject matter of this study is a result of both my own life experiences as an Iranian who witnessed the 1979 Revolution at close hands, and then the post-revolutionary politics. I had the opportunity to reflect on this Revolution and the subsequent Reform efforts during and after Ayatollah Khomeini's life. I also witnessed at hand the 1997 Reform Movement, saw the excitement and later disappointment of people with reformists. This dissertation is a result of field research over several visits to Iran, and yet it is a study with its limitations as every study is necessarily limited. Last but not least, this dissertation is an objective study of modern Iran to the extent there can be the pursuit of objectivity on such critical and controversial matters.

---

[23] See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973)

## 5. Chapter Breakdown

The purpose of chapter one is to set out a theoretical framework to which this study subscribes. It will outline a procedural political concept of democracy while emphasizing two social aspects of democracy: societal empowerment and social equality. The chapter will then sketch out an integrative and dialectical approach in which both structure and agency contribute to democratization and de-democratization.

Chapter two will examine the historical background against which Iran's third wave evolved. Iran's democratization over the past century has proceeded in three waves, which correspond to parallel global waves of democratization. The "wave metaphor" will be used for situating Iran's in excess of a century struggle for the "rule of law" in a larger historical context of democratization. The chapter will examine Iran's first and second waves of democratization.

Chapter three will examine the causes and consequences of Iran's third wave, exemplified in the form of the 1979 Revolution. Because *Khomeinism* has remained the central part of Iran's third wave, the chapter will examine the making of *Khomeinism* in the course of the1979 Revolution. The chapter will answer a few prior questions: why and how did *Khomeinism* become the hegemonic voice not only of Shiism but of the opposition to the Shah's regime? How did it successfully isolate its contemporaries among traditional and modern Iranian discourses? What factors prevented other religious and/or secular discourses from being able to compete with *Khomeinism*?

Chapter four will examine Iran's remarkable and distinctive journey from the last monarchy to the First Republic. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, to contextualize the ideas and politics of Ayatollah Khomeini in the course of modern

Iranian history, and thus to introduce the making and the consolidation of *Khomeinism*. Second, to examine how *Khomeinism* contributed to the de-democratization of Iran's third wave, making Iran's first Republic a republic of paradox and partial totalitarian, authoritarian, and democratic politics.

Chapter five will examine *Khomeinism* after Khomeini by looking at the dynamics and difficulties of Iran's third wave under the second government of the Republic (1989-1997). The chapter will look at the routinization of the Islamic Republic, while examining how the nature of the state and dynamics of civil society contributed to the rise of the 1997 May Movement.

Chapter six will examine the rise and fall of the third government of the Republic, Khatami's reformist government (1997-2005). It discusses how and why Khatami's moment was a lost opportunity in a transition to democracy. The chapter will suggest that strategic misjudgements contributed to this loss, and yet it was not purely strategic considerations that brought about a reversal. The reformist government failed because it was bound by the institutional and intellectual legacy of *Khomeinism*. The chapter also examines why the fall of the reformist regime was the failure of "*Khomeinism* with a human face."

The conclusion will examine the lessons and legacies for the future success and stability of Iranian democracy.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Agency and Structure in Democratization

### 1. Introduction

Democracy is a contested concept, and the process of democratization is a complicated task. Different structural and non-structural variables brought democracy to different countries at different periods of time. Different games were played by different social and political actors to achieve democracy. The purpose of this chapter is to look at these contested concept and complicated task. It also aims at setting a theoretical framework to which this study subscribes. In doing so, we will first define the meaning of democracy in the context of democratization theories. We will then review the literature on democratic transition in light of Iran's paths toward democracy. The focal point in discussing democratization theories revolves not around the consolidation or stability of democracy, but the genesis of democracy or the conditions and causes conducive to democratic transition.

In the first part of this chapter I shall argue that the Dahl-Linzian procedural, minimal, political concept of democracy suffices for a successful transition to democracy. But this minimal concept cannot serve the stability of democracy, as the stability and consolidation of democracy require a substantive version of democracy in which two social elements of democracy – societal empowerment and social equality – are warranted. I shall examine Jurgen Habermas' concept of "deliberative democracy" to explore the social aspects of democracy. In the second part I shall briefly look at different notions of democratic transition and democratic consolidation, and then examine two

major theoretical trends in the literature on democratization. The first trend is structural theories, and the second is actor-centred theories. The final section will sketch out an integrative and dialectical approach in which both structure and agency contribute to democratization and de-democratization. In sum, this chapter establishes a theoretical framework in examining the factors, the actors, and difficulties involved in democratic transition in post-revolutionary Iran.

## 2. Defining Democracy

It is generally argued that the process of democratization is a transition from forms of totalitarianism and/or authoritarianism, to some form of democracy. But the meaning and nature of democracy have changed over time and space. John Markoff argues that in fact the history of democratization reveals the struggle over the meaning of democracy.[24] Both democracy and its meaning evolved in the process of democratization. What we now call modern democracy was often experienced as a number of separate questions. People at first did not want democracy; they demanded a less fearful and more lawful state. The first parliament in Western countries was not a legislative institution, but was a consultative body. European medieval constitutionalism was far from a modern concept of constitutionalism; it provided a legal framework to institutionalize the rule of privileged classes. For several centuries democratization meant to eliminate the multiple votes enjoyed by the privileged classes and to make the exclusive electoral system more inclusive, to transform a competitive electoral system based on gender, literacy, and income into a comprehensive universal suffrage. It took more than a century to

---

[24] John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change* (Thousand Oak; California: Pine Forge Press, 1996).

consolidate the principle of universal suffrage.[25] It took over two centuries to achieve what we currently acknowledge as modern democracy. Likewise, David Beetham argues that the gradual development of democracy is a historical fact, and to ignore this fact is to make an ahistorical argument.[26] The implication for this study is that there has been a gradual transformation in the meaning and understanding of democracy in over a century of struggle for democracy in Iran. This is to suggest that a substantial difference exists between the meaning of democracy and the goals of democratic transition in Iran's first, second, and the current waves. And yet this difference points to a significant historical link in the struggle for democracy in modern Iran. Like the Western waves of democratic transition, there has been continuity and change over the meaning of democracy in the Iranian waves.

Theoretically, historical changes over the meaning and nature of democracy suggest that there exist a number of theories, but no single theory, of democracy. There are several forms of practicing democracy. David Collier and Steven Levitsky identify over 550 subtypes of democracy in almost 150 cases.[27] How do we then move from such conceptual chaos? At the risk of simplification but with a merit of providing a clear classification, democratic theories can be divided into two primary groups: the maximalist and the minimalist theories. The maximalist theories offer a radical, comprehensive and substantive definition of democracy consisting not only of political rights but social, economic, gender, and cultural rights. More specifically, in this definition of democracy, popular legitimacy (origin) and democratic political

---

[25] See John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change.*

[26] David Beetham, Democracy and Human Rights (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999), chapters 8-9

[27] David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: A Pragmatic Approach to Choices about Concepts," Annual Review of Political Science 2, no. 1: 537-565.

arrangements (institutions) are minimum conditions of democracy; the origin and institutions of democracy are required but not sufficient factors for democracy. In addition to the origin and the institutions, radical goals and substantive outcomes are essential parts of democracy. Democratic goals and outcomes are defined in light of social, economic, cultural, transnational, and political democracy.[28] The minimalist definition accords with the origin and the institutions of democracy. Democracy, it is argued, originates from the people and works through such institutions as constitutions, political parties and parliaments. According to Adam Przeworski, democracy is "the institutionalization of uncertainty," and "the decisive step towards democracy is the devolution of power from a group of people to a set of rules."[29] More specifically, Joseph Schumpeter argues that democracy "means that only the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them."[30] Schumpeter also suggests that because democracy originates from *demos,* it is up to the *demos* to define itself, to decide who deserves the full right of citizenship and determine who is in and who is out of democratic procedures: "Leave it to every *populous* to define himself."[31] The minimalists therefore affirm procedural democracy, suggesting that democracy is a constitutional

---

[28] The maximalist theories include, but are not limited to, social democracy, radical democracy, and theories, which place emphasis on gender and community rights, participation, civil society, and transnational democracy. See for example, C. Douglas Lummis, *Radical Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); C. B. McPherson, *Democratic Theory: essays in Retrieval* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), Chantal Mouffe, The Return of the Political (London: Verso, 1993), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985), Claude Lefort, Democracy and Political Theory (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), Iris Marion Young, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib ed., *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 120-135.

[29] Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 14.

[30] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), p. 270.

[31] Ibid, pp. 244-245.

government with certain rules and procedures and uncertain results and outcomes. The Schumpeterian minimalism implies that democracies are entitled to include or exclude as many people as they decide.

This version of minimalism left a significant problem unsolved, as neither the origin, nor institution, nor rules could guarantee democratic outcomes. Almost all modern populist totalitarian regimes, not to mention authoritarian polities, claimed to rule by the people, hold some form of democratic institutions, and set some popular rules at least partially and temporally. A minimalist version of democracy encourages mass participation and endorses majority rule. But this minimalism has often reduced citizens to masse, and has also degenerated competitive participation to mass mobilization. Empirical evidence suggests that democratic procedures have often been instrumental in redefining democratic principles, ignoring human rights, and violating minority rights. Formal democratic procedures, as proved in Iran under *Khomeinism*, were instrumental in redefining the populous. Under such procedures the citizenry was redefined and reduced to believers, as defined by the state authorities. The state implicitly created an insider/outsider (*khodi/gheire-khodi*) dichotomy to redefine the concept of citizenship. Likewise, democratic institutions were easily transformed from a mechanism of choice into a mere device of mass mobilization. As such, the very source and institutions of democracy could turn into the anti-thesis of democracy.

In his seminal work, *Polyarchy*, Robert Dahl advanced the Schumpeterian version of minimal democracy. Although Dahl remained a minimalist, he set two more qualitative criteria for the minimalist procedural definition of democracy. "What we think of democratization," Dahl suggests, are "made up of at least two dimensions: public

contestation and the right to participate."[32] For Dahl, "public contestation" would elevate procedural democracy from a mere electoral democracy with the people's "right to participate," to a polity responsive to the right of "public opposition" and committed to the rights of minorities. Implicit in Dahl's argument is that the right of participation should guarantee the right of inclusive citizenship. Democracy requires inclusive institutions and fair procedures through which all citizens can compete and express their free choice. For Dahl, competition and participation would guarantee the inclusiveness and would save a political system from the ill-effects of electoral democracy. In *Democracy and Its Critics*, Dahl suggests that modern democracy or, to use his own concept, *polyarchy* holds two characteristics. First, a relatively high proportion of adults hold the rights of citizenship; second, citizens can oppose the political system. The first characteristic differentiates modern democracy from the exclusive polities of early twentieth century Europe, in which only a small portion of the elites were defined as the people. The second distinguishes modern democracy from modern authoritarian regimes in which citizenship does not hold the legal right to oppose the system.[33]

Second only to Robert Dahl, as James Mahoney put it, Juan Linz "was a major founder of the procedural and minimal definition of democracy."[34] According to Linz, democracy consists of the

> legal freedom to formulate and advocate political alternatives with the concomitant rights to associations, free speech, and other basic freedoms of person; free and nonviolent competition among leaders with periodic validation of their claim to rule; inclusion of all effective political offices in the democratic

---

[32] Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p.5.
[33] Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 220-223.
[34] James Mahoney, "Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research: The Case of Democracy and Authoritarianism," in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 158.

process; and provision for the participation of all members of the community, without their political preference.[35]

In the same line of argument Charles Tilly suggests that democracies establish "fairly general and reliable rules of law" instead of the "massive asymmetry, coercion, exploitation, patronage, and communal segmentation that have characterized most political regimes."[36] In McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's view, "working definitions of democracy divide into three overlapping categories: *sustentative* criteria emphasising qualities of human experience and social ties; *constitutional* criteria emphasising legal procedures such as elections and referenda; *political-process* criteria emphasising interactions among politically constituted actors."[37] Democracy, they argue, "maintains broad citizenship, equal and autonomous citizenship, binding consultation of citizens at large…as well as protection of citizens from arbitrary actions by governmental agents."[38] Hence, Tilly argues that democratization means "featuring relatively broad and equal citizenship" which protects "citizens from arbitrary actions by governmental agents."[39]

The *"political-process"* criteria concur with the Dahl-Linzian procedural minimal democracy, which simultaneously insists on elements of electoral democracy, principles of pluralism and citizenship, and fundamental political rights. This notion transcends the Schumpeterian model of electoral democracy to a substantive, and yet minimal, definition of democracy. This procedural minimal democracy meets necessary political conditions required for a successful transition to democracy. One has to make a clear

---

[35] Juan Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 5; quoted in Mahoney, p. 158.
[36] Charles Tilly, *Social Movements 1768-2004* (Boulder: Paradigm Publisher, 2004), p. 127.
[37] Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 265.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Charles Tilly, *Social Movements*, p. 13.

distinction between factors involved in democratic transitions and those in democratic consolidation. "The factors that keep a democracy stable," Dankwart Rustow argues, "may not be the ones that brought it into existence: explanations of democracy must distinguish between function and genesis."[40]

Hence, the present study adopts the Dahl-Linzian procedural, political concept of democracy *only* to the extent that it offers a minimal version of democracy to be used in the transition to democracy. This minimalist position needs further clarification: first, I am aware of the intense debate in the literature about the transferability of such procedural, political, liberal democracy and consider it neither ideal nor universal democracy.[41] Second, the success, stability, and consolidation of democracy need to incorporate *social* elements into the minimal, political concept of democracy. Democracy in the "Lincolnian" definition is about the rule of people, by the people and for the people, and social elements of democracy gives agency to the people. To this end, I define social elements of democracy in two specific terms: societal empowerment and social equality. In the following section I will problematize both liberal and republican versions of democracy and argue for the usefulness of deliberative democracy. Third, it is absolutely necessary to make a clear distinction between the minimalist and maximalist definition of democracy when we examine democratization in the Iranian context. There is a strong tendency toward maximalism in the political culture of the Iranian opposition – a negative utopianism and/or a religious or secular Messianic culture. Maximalism as such has ironically produced two seemingly opposing approaches in the Iranian context:

---

[40] Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," in Lisa Anderson, ed., *Transitions to Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 21.

[41] See footnotes 28 for a list of radical alternative theories of democracy. Also, see a critical examination of modernization theories on the following pages.

political apathy and blind radicalism. It has deprived gradual change. History teaches us we can begin with minimal achievements while keeping in mind that the goal remains far further than this minimalism.

## 2.1. Societal empowerment and democracy

Societal empowerment is about strengthening civil society and establishing democratic procedures based on engagement, dialogue and deliberation of civil society. Jurgen Habermas's concept of "deliberative democracy" focuses on this societal aspect, as opposed to a merely political notion of democracy. In "Three Normative Models of Democracy," he introduces a new procedural and deliberative concept of democracy where politics is about deliberation of civil society and democracy aims at the "institutionalization of a public use of reason jointly exercised by autonomous citizens."[42]

Deliberative democracy, Habermas argues, "differs in relevant aspects from both the liberal and the republican paradigm."[43] In classical liberalism, society is perceived as a "market-structured network of interactions among *private* persons." Politics is the function of "pushing *private* interests against a government apparatus." By contrast, in the republican tradition as set by Rousseau and Hannah Arndt, Habermas argues, "politics is conceived as the reflective form of substantial ethical life."[44] Put simply, the liberal and the republican paradigm differ on the concept of citizenry. On the classical-liberal view, "the citizen's status is determined by primarily according to negative rights they have vis-à-vis the state and other citizens." Citizens enjoy their "private interests", which are finally "aggregated into political will that makes an impact on the

---

[42] Jurgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed. *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 23.
[43] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," p. 21.
[44] Ibid, italics added.

administration."[45] On the republican view, citizens are not "private persons"; they are "politically autonomous authors of a community of free and equal persons."[46] On this view, Habermas argues, "free and equal citizens reach an understanding on which goals and norms lie in the equal interest of all;" citizens hold positive rights – "pre-eminently rights of political participation and communication."[47] In other words, the classical-liberal and republican models accept a state-centred model of democracy; they both "presuppose a view of society as centred in the state – be it the state as guardian of a market-society or the state as the self-conscious institutionalization of an ethical community."[48]

The two paradigms also differ on the "nature of the political process." In the liberal view, Habermas observes, "success is measured by the citizen's approval, quantified as votes, of persons and programs."[49] The political process is built on a "success-oriented attitude." The voting preference, he argues, "has the same structure as the acts of choice made by participants in a market."[50] In the republican view, "the paradigm is not the market but dialogue. This dialogic conception imagines politics as contestation of values and not simply questions of preference."[51] This idealism of the republican view, Habermas indicates, implies that "the democratic process is dependent on the virtues of citizens devoted to the public weal."[52] This Rousseauian democratic tradition assumes that there is a prior collective socio-ethical bond – common good –

---

[45] Ibid, p. 22
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid, p. 26
[49] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," p. 23
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid, p. 24

which guides citizens' behaviours. "The unanimity of the political legislature" is secured in advance by a "substantive ethical consensus."[53]

By contrast, in deliberative democracy, writes Habermas, "democratic will-formation draws its legitimating force not from a previous convergence of settled ethical convictions but from the communicative presuppositions that allow the better arguments to come into play in various forms of deliberation and from the procedures that secure fair bargaining."[54] Hence, deliberative democracy holds elements of dialogue and procedural politics. It differs from classical liberalism since it places more emphasis on societal dialogue and deliberation, and it differs from the republican view as it advances procedural politics rather than a collective prior ethical concept of politics.

In classical liberalism, society is apolitical and people are de-politicized; this model, Habermas argues, "hinges not on the democratic self-determination of deliberating citizens but on the legal institutionalization of an economic society that is supposed to guarantee an essentially non-political common good by the satisfaction of private preferences."[55] In the republican model, society is "from the very start, political society," and democracy is "equivalent to the political self-organization of society as a whole."[56] But in deliberative democracy the "normative content arises from the very structure of communicative action."[57] This notion of democracy depends not on "a collectively acting citizenry but on the institutionalization of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication." Deliberative democracy subscribes

---

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid
[55] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," p. 27.
[56] Ibid, p. 26
[57] Ibid.

neither to the liberal notion of apolitical private citizen nor to the republican view of a collective political society.

In classical liberalism "the rule of law is applied to many isolated private subjects," while in the republican view citizens are collective actors who reflect and act for the whole society. In deliberative democracy, as in the liberal model, "the boundaries between 'state' and 'society' are respected; but in this sense, *civil society provides the social basis of autonomous public spheres that remain as distinct from the economic system as from the administration.*"[58] This implies that civil society "should gain the strength to hold its own against the two other mechanisms of social integration – money and administrative power."[59]

In the liberal model, the function of democratic will-formation is merely legitimating power; in the republican model, the function of democratic will-formation constitutes society as a political community. But in deliberative democracy, the function is more than legitimation and less than the constitution of power. The administrative structure provides a system for "collectively binding decisions," while the communicative structure of the public sphere provides a societal network, which reacts to and reflects public opinion.[60]

In the republican model, the whole is a sovereign citizenry; in the liberal model, the whole is a constitution, which guarantees the rule of law and liberal values. Deliberative democracy is instead a "de-centered society" where power "springs from the interactions between legally institutionalized will-formation and culturally mobilized

---

[58] Ibid, p. 28
[59] Ibid, italic added.
[60] Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," p. 29.

public."[61] Deliberative democracy provides a medium for a *"conscious* integration of the *legal community."*[62] It works with "the higher-level inter-subjectivity of communication processes that flow through both parliamentary bodies and the informal networks of the public sphere."[63] Habermas's procedural concept of deliberative democracy, in sum, aims "to bring universalistic principles of justice into the horizon of the specific form of life of a particular community."[64] In his recent lecture presented at the Holberg Prize Seminar, Habermas argued that "the content of political decisions that can be enforced by the state *must be formulated* in a language that is accessible to all citizens and it *must be possible to justify them* in this language."[65] To this end, it places civil society in the centre by empowering the forces of civil society and acknowledging the role of agency in socio-political change; it keeps distance from an elitist conception of politics where civil society remains apolitical and immobilized. The elitist conception of politics, as we will see in the following chapters, has resulted in the institutional weakness of the Iranian democrats since the last century. The elites and intellectuals failed to organize, mobilize, and communicate with the ordinary people in Iran. The repressive nature of the state has certainly reduced the opportunity for intellectuals to convey their message to their own people. More importantly, however, it has been the lack of language accessible to the common people, which place some obstacle in communicating with public. This brings us to the significance and relevance of culture, religion included, for democratization in modern Iran.

---

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid, p. 30
[63] Ibid, p. 28
[64] Ibid, p. 25
[65] Jurgen Habermas, "Religion in the public sphere," *Lecture presented at the Holberg Prize Seminar* 29 November 2005, p. 9

## 2.1.1 Societal empowerment and religion: Civil public religion

According to Jurgen Habermas, modernity is an "unfinished project." Similarly, some social theories suggest that "'tradition' is likewise a perpetually unfinished project – that is how people understand their traditions and apply them to practical situation."[66] The notion of an *unfinished project of tradition* implies that tradition and change are not mutually exclusive concepts, and there is instead a constant and critical dialogue between tradition and modernity, and religion and democracy. A discursive dialogue with culture, and mining the tradition could show that modern values such as freedom, democracy, and justice are universal and have native roots in the intellectual soil of every society. A dialogue with people's traditions and cultures empowers civil society, facilitates active and deliberative engagement, and provides the most effective path to challenge the status quo. It brings abut change from within.

When autocratic regimes utilize non-democratic religious discourses to legitimize their rule, democratic interpretations of religion and tradition in the public sphere are vital to the success of democratization.[67] The autocratic version of religion can best be overcome by a democratic religion. To this end, a public expression of democratic religion can defeat autocratic religion. When the polity appeals to religious doctrines and the society remains a relatively religious one, a private and isolated religion, as classic-liberalism wants us to believe, will not serve democratization. In such a condition, Abdullahi An-Na'im reminds us that democrats must not "abandon" the public field to

---

[66] Roy R. Anderson, Robert F. Seibert, and Jon G. Wagner, eds., *Politics and Change in the Middle East: Sources of Conflict and Accommodation* (Upper Saddle River, N J: Prentice Hall, 1998; quoted in Mohmood Monshipori, "The Politics of Culture and Human Rights in Iran: Globalizing and Localizing Dynamics," in Mahmood Monshipouri, et al. eds., *Constructing Human Rights in the Age of globalization* (Armonk: M.E. Sharp, 2003), p. 122.

[67] Alfred Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations,'" *Journal of Democracy* 11 (4), pp. 37-57, p. 45.

the autocrats who manipulate religion for their own political purpose.[68] Traditions, religions included, are unfinished projects and able to accommodate with modern normative values. Hence, a civil public religion can provide a viable alternative to the autocratic political religion, since it communicates with the people's language and facilitates their active participation in politics. A civil public religion is an alternative from within religious traditions, which following Habermas' line of reasoning, aims at "a reconstruction of sacred truths that is compelling for people of faith in light of modern living conditions for which no alternatives any longer exist."[69]

Civil public religion is not a political religion institutionalized in the state structure and, therefore, can live with democracy. A democratic state, Habermas argues, "must not transform the requisite *institutional* separation of religion and politics into an undue *mental and psychological* burden for all those citizens who follow a faith."[70] A democratic state must not also expect believers "to split their identity in public and private components as long as they participate in public debates and contribute to the formation of public opinions."[71] Habermas goes even further and suggests that under certain conditions "the secular citizens must open their minds," in order to learn from "the normative truth content of a religious expression" and enter into "dialogue" with

---

[68] Abdullahi, An-Na'im. *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law.* Syracuse University Press, 1999, p. xii

[69] Habermas, "Religion in the public sphere," p. 10. A public civil religion, as I interpret it, differs from a state-sponsored religion. The former does appreciate legal impediments in the political process to prevent autocratic religious interpretations from undermining the overarching principles of democracy, including the separation of religious institutions and state.

[70] Ibid, p. 7

[71] Habermas, "Religion in the public sphere," p. 8

their fellow religious citizens.[72] Such a dialogue serves societal empowerment, and thus the success and stability of democracy.

## 2.2. Social equality and democracy

The second social element of democracy is social equality. Democracy, to use Michael Walzer's argument, requires not only an open and inclusive political society, but also an open and inclusive economic society. According to Walzer, "the members of political society and economic society are collectively responsible for each other's welfare." Workers and other citizens, "have claims, always partial, on the resources of the whole society." More specifically, "economic power," Walzer argues, "should be shared by the same people who share political power." This principle, he argues, "by no means rules out market relations; it only rules out what might be called market imperialism – the conversion of private wealth into political influence and social privilege."[73] It is only with both political and economic openness and equality that we would have a "society of lively, energetic, active, component people shaping their common life."[74] Social equality gives meaning and substance to political democracy; it makes the value of democratic ideas tangible to the public. Social inequality results in a gradual decline of democratic aspirations in civil society; it gives rise to populist-authoritarian trends and pushes democratic ideas and institutions at bay. "Poverty," as Przeworski et. al observes, "can trap societies in its grip" and "breeds dictatorships."[75]

---

[72] Ibid.
[73] Walzer argues "Communism has given socialism a bad name." See Michael Walzer, "A Credo for This Moment," in *Dissent* 37 (Spring 1990): no. 2, p. 160
[74] Ibid.
[75] There is a complex relation between democracy and development. The economic effects of political instability and the impact of political regimes on the growth of total income differ across countries. For a successful effort on this issue, see Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and

Iran's third wave of democratization provides evidence for a negative correlation between democratic aspiration and social inequality.

## 3. Theorizing Democratization

Like theories of democracy, democratization theories have changed over time and context; they have reflected the development of society and state in different socio-historical contexts. The first generation of democratization theories adopted a structuralist account, while the second generation holds a voluntarist approach. We will examine major structural theories such as modernization theories, Barrington Moore's school of historical sociology, the dependency and world system theories, and the "three power structure" introduced by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens. We will then look at the actor-centred school or voluntarism, political conditions, different paths towards democratic transitions, and the role of civil society and social movements in democratization. Finally, we will argue that this study adopts the third trend of democratization theories, which successfully synthesizes structuralism and voluntarism.

Two major concepts are central in the study of democratization: democratic causation and democratic consolidation. All democratization theories, therefore, examine both causes or conditions, and consolidation or stability of democracy. Some of the theories such as voluntarism give more attention to democratic causation, while others look at both phases of democratization. These two phases of democratization are examined by two periods of transitions. According to O'Donnell and Schmitter, "transition is the interval between one political regime and another....Transitions are delimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an

---

Fernando Limongi, *Development and Democracy: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 270, 277.

authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some form of democracy, the return to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative."[76] In other words, there are two periods of transition: first, a transition to democracy; secondly, a transition to a consolidated democracy. By the same token, Adam Przeworski refers to two phases of democratization: the extrication from authoritarianism and the constitution of democracy.[77] Likewise, Andreas Schedler looks at the complexity of the concept of transition and introduces the "multiple" meanings of democratic consolidation. The "negative notions" of democratic consolidation, he argues, refer to "avoiding democratic breakdown and avoiding democratic erosion." The "positive notions" of democratic consolidation include "completing, organizing, and deepening democracy."[78] According to Schedler, we should restrict the concept of democratic consolidation to its negative notions: "The term 'democratic consolidation' should refer to expectations of regime continuity – and to nothing else."[79] Completing democracy is a task of electoral democracy or semi-democracy, where democracy is not yet in place. Hence, at this point "any talk about 'the consolidation of democracy' is misleading."[80] Organizing democracy differs from consolidation of democracy, because "a democracy may be secure against reversals even if its party system is still inchoate and fluid; and conversely, a democracy may break down even if its party system is highly

---

[76] Guillermo O'Donnell, Phillip Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 6

[77] "Adam Przeworski, "The games of Transitions," in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and Samuel Valenzuela eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp, 105-152.

[78] Andreas Schedler, "What is Democratic Consolidation?" *Journal of Democracy*, (1998) 9 No. 2: 91-107, p. 103.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Andreas Schedler, "What is Democratic Consolidation?" p. 103.

institutionalized."[81] We should not, he argues, "associate democratic consolidation with democratic deepening" because it makes the concept of democratic consolidation "open and boundless" and "a free-for-all." "In this sense, no democracy will ever be 'fully consolidated.'"[82] In sum, democratic transition, Andreas Schedler argues, refers to a process of transition from a nondemocratic regime toward democracy. Democratic consolidation, he suggests, points to a process of avoiding democratic erosion.[83]

## 3.1. The Structural Account

The structuralist theories of democratization are often identified with "modernization" theories and Barrington Moore's school of "historical sociology." Although not specifically theories of democratization, the "dependency" and "world-system" theories are also classified as structuralist theories of social change.

### 3.1.1. Modernization theories

The classical modernization theories were developed in the late 1950s. These theories perceived social change as a progressive and irreversible process with a universal and linear path. The route to democracy, it was argued, corresponds to the Western path taken from tradition to modernity. Tradition and modernity, Walt Rostow argued, are mutually exclusive concepts; modernization is associated with westernization, while modernity broadly consists of urbanization, industrialization, secularization, and eventually, democratization.[84] This generation of modernization theories examined the

---

[81] Ibid

[82] Ibid, pp. 104-105

[83] See Andreas Schedler, "How Should We Study Democratic Consolidation?" *Democratization* (1998) 5 No. 4: 1-19; also See Andreas Schedler, "What is Democratic Consolidation?"

[84] See Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) and Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958).

rise of the first democracies in the West in general, and Britain in particular, where structural factors played a major role in democratization. Hence, much attention was paid to factors such as the Industrial Revolution, the rise and crisis of capitalism, international and civil wars, and class compromises and class conflict.[85] On this view, democratization was driven by structural pressures, not elite decisions. Seymour Martin Lipset, a towering figure of this generation, argued that democracy is not a choice; it is a natural result of economic modernization. Development and democracy, he argued, go hand in hand; economic development contributes to the growth of a middle class and a large middle class "is able to reward moderate and democratic parties."[86] A strong capitalism and independent bourgeoisie results in democracy; the more well-to-do a nation, so the argument goes, the greater the chances it can sustain democracy.

But the consolidation of authoritarian politics and the complex picture of development in most developing countries raised serious doubts about the universal application of classical-modernization theories. Hence the new generation of modernization theories developed since the late 1970's; they revised and modified the assumptions of the first generation of modernization theorists. Samuel Huntington and, to a lesser degree, Larry Diamond admitted that there is no universal positive correlation between development and democracy. Unlike the classical theorists, they admitted that internal factors alone, that is the internal dynamics of state and society, cannot explain the rise or the crisis of development and democracy. External factors such as the impact of the international community and democratic diffusion in neighbouring counties are

---

[85] Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 46-56.

[86] Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, (1959), pp. 53, 83. This school owes much to the works of scholars such as Walt Rostow, Lucian Pye, Almond Verba, Talcott Parsons, and recently, Larry Diamond, and A. Leftwich.

conducive to democratization.[87] Samuel Huntington explicitly rejected the universal application of Western democratic rule, boldly challenging the idea that non-Western civilizations would follow the Western path of liberal democracy. Islamic and Confucian civilizations in particular, he argued, are inherently incompatible with liberal democracy.[88] On this view, democracy is not only Western in origin but also uniquely suited to Occidental culture. Hence, the absence of democracy in the Muslim world is the fact of "Muslim Exceptionalism." Ernest Gellner argues that Muslim societies are essentially different than others, in that "no secularization has taken place in the world of Islam."[89] In *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, he argues that Islam has been exceptionally immune to the forces of secularization.[90] By the same token, Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington maintain that Western culture is unique and essentially different from other civilizations and in particular from Islam.[91] The inevitable fusion of religion and politics, Bernard Lewis argues, is something that historically and intellectually attaches to Islam.[92] According to Huntington, while "in Islam, God is Caesar," in the West "God and Caesar, church and state, spiritual and temporal authority, have been a prevailing dualism."[93] For Huntington, it is not "Islamic fundamentalism" but the "fundamental" essence of Islam that makes it incompatible with modernity and democracy. Huntington's essentialist argument implies that democracy is an

---

[87] See Samuel P. Huntington, *Third wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century*. Norman, Okla: University f Oklahoma Press, 1991); Larry Diamond and Gary Marks, eds., *Reexamining democracy: essays in honour of Seymour Martin Lipset* (Newbury Park, California: 1992); Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Nationalism, ethnic conflict, and democracy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994).

[88] See Huntington, Samuel P. *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the Modern World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

[89] Ernest Gellner, "Islam and Marxism: Some Comparisons," *International Affairs* 67 (January 1991) 2; also, see Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (New York: Penguin, 1994) 15-29.

[90] Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (New York: Rutledge, 1992)

[91] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990).

[92] Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[93] Samuel P. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the Modern World*, p. 70.

achievement of Western civilization, and therefore not easily transferable to other civilizations.[94] Thus, the "Islamic mind" and democracy are mutually exclusive. But Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid argues that

> to speak about an 'Islamic Mind' in abstraction from all constrains of geography and history, and in isolation from the social and cultural conditioning of Islamic societies, can only leads us into unrealistic, even metaphysical, speculations. Instead, it is more realistic to look for the root of this panic reaction to critique in the crisis of modernization and complicated relationship between the Islamic world and the West.[95]

Fred Halliday suggests that "there is nothing specifically 'Islamic' about" obstacles that hinder democracy in the Muslim societies, though some of these obstacles "tend to be legitimized in terms of Islamic doctrine." Any argument about incompatibility or compatibility between Islam and democracy adopts "the false premise that there is one true, traditionally established 'Islamic' answer to the question, and this timeless 'Islam' rules social and political practices. There is no such answer and no such 'Islam'."[96] For Halliday, Islam is so broad that

> it is possible to catch almost any fish one wants. It is, like all the great religions, a reservoir of values, symbols and ideas from which it is possible to derive a contemporary politics and social code: the answer as to why this or that interpretation was put upon Islam resides therefore, not in the religion and its text itself, but in the contemporary needs of those articulating Islamic politics.[97]

---

[94]Jose Casanova, "Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam," *Social Research*. Vol. 68, No. 4 (Winter 2001) 1050-1051.

[95] Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid, "Heaven, Which Way?" *ALAhram* 12-18 September 2002.

[96] Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation* (London: Tauris, 1996), p. 116.

[97] Fred Halliday, "The Politics of Islamic Fundamentalism: Iran, Tunisia and the Challenge to the Secular State" in A.S. Ahmed and H. Donnan (eds.), *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity* (London: Rutledge, 1994), p. 96.

Similarly, Talal Asad suggests that both Islamists and Western Orientalists share "the idea that Islam was originally – and therefore essentially – a theocratic state;"[98] but, for the Islamists, "this history constituted the betrayal of a sacred ideal that Muslims are required as believers to restore;" and for the Orientalists, "it defines a schizophrenic compromise that has always prevented a progressive reform of Islam."[99] Thus the Islamic state is not as much a product of some Islamic essence as "it is the product of modern politics and the modernizing state."[100] The modern construction of reality created the discourse of Islamism. "The essentialist construction of Islam was thoroughly modern in the sense that modernity demanded an essentialist standardization of the world."[101]

According to Norris and Inglehart, the data and empirical evidence suggest that "when political attitudes are compared far from a clash of values, there is a minimal difference between the Muslim world and the West"[102] and they are "similar in their positive orientation toward democratic ideals."[103] More importantly, "support for democracy is surprisingly whispered among Islamic publics, even among those who live in authoritarian societies."[104] The empirical evidence, as Norris and Inglehart argue, urges "strong caution in generalizing from the type of regime to the state of public opinion."[105] Authoritarian regimes, Islamist or otherwise, do not represent the state of Muslims' public opinion.

---

[98] Talal Asad, "Europe against Islam: Islam in Europe," *The Muslim World* 87:2 (April 1997) 191.
[99] Ibid, pp. 190-191.
[100] Ibid, p. 190
[101] Richard Schulze, "Is there an Islamic Modernity?" in *The Islamic World and the West: An Introduction to Political Cultures and International Relations*, ed, Kai Hafez (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000), p. 24.
[102] Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.154.
[103] Ibid, p.155.
[104] Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, p.155
[105] Ibid

Huntington's colleague, Francis Fukuyama revived some old assumptions in a new and novel discourse. We have arrived, Francis Fukuyama argued, at the "End of History", and the "Last Man" has been born in Western liberal democracy. Non-Western countries will be joining the West due to the worldwide structural force of modernization.[106] His argument implies that the path to this "End" is both unique and universal. It is unique because there is no democratic alternative path except the Western one; it is universal because liberal democracy is a desirable model across the globe. The spread of economic and cultural globalization contributes to the universal acceptance of liberal democracy.

Modernization theories still believe in a dichotomy between tradition and modernity, and subscribe to a Western-centric approach. The pessimist Huntington suggests that non-Western civilizations are incapable of democratization and must be left alone. The optimist Fukuyama argues that non-Western cultures and traditions are short of internal dynamism for democratization, but capable of adapting Western liberal democracy. Hence, they both assume that the West is the best, non-Western traditions are inhospitable to democracy, and the path to democratization remains particular.

### 3.1.2. Dependency and World-system theories

The predicament of development and the democratic deficit in the global South, and the lack of compelling explanations on the part of modernization theories, contributed to the rise of a new set of radical theories of social change: dependency and world-system theories. Andre Gunder Frank, one of the founding fathers of dependency theories, argued that the world is divided into two categories: the North "metropolis" and the South "satellite." The colonial legacy and unequal international structures have

---

[106] Franci Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*.(New York: Free Press, 1992).

created conditions in which the satellite remains highly depended upon the metropolis. Development of the North has caused underdevelopment of the South. The fate and future of development in the global South, so the argument goes, depends on external factors. It is not the backward local traditions that hindered development; but instead the inferior position of the satellite states in the global structure and their economic dependency. Development and dependency, Frank argued, are mutually exclusive.[107] Fernando Cardoso revised Frank's radical and pessimistic view. Dependency and capitalist development, Cardoso argued, are compatible. The satellites are capable of capitalist development, but this so-called "dependent capitalist development" remains incompatible with democracy. The "dependent capitalist development" increased the size of the middle class and strengthened the power of the military in Latin America. But the internal dynamics of class struggle and the global structure of power, he argued, turned the middle class and the military into two internal pillars of authoritarianism.[108] Likewise, Guillermo O'Donnell offered the same line of argument in explaining the complex process of development and democratization in Latin America. In the early 1970's, a number of relatively modernized countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay fell into a new type of authoritarian regime: "bureaucratic authoritarian" states. The rise of the "bureaucratic authoritarian" regimes, O'Donnell argued, was due to a combination of the internal class factor (the coalition of the urban middle class and the military-civilian elites), and the external factor (the position of these states in the global economic structure). According to O'Donnell, economic modernization in general and the policy of

---

[107] Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), pp. 2-15.

[108] Fernando H. Cardoso, "Associated-Dependent Development: Theoretical and Practical Implications," in Alfred Stepan (ed.), *Authoritarian Brazil* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 142-167, pp. 149-160.

Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) in particular, increased the size of the middle class. Like its military partner, this class favoured authoritarianism, not democracy. The ISI policy and the international market economy, O'Donnell argued, contributed to this authoritarian tendency. The global decline in the demands and prices of Latin American primary exports caused internal economic stagnation; the economic disaster brought public protests and demands for higher wages, while a new economic policy required freezing the labour wage. The coalition of the middle class and the elites believed that political opening and democracy would jeopardize this new policy of intensive industrialization. It was in this context that the middle class and the elites turned into the twin pillars of "bureaucratic authoritarian regimes."[109] The argument put forward by Cardoso and O'Donnell implies that although "dependent capitalist development" contributes to the greater size of the middle class; it is more likely to generate authoritarianism, not democracy. More importantly, the empirical evidence suggests that the middle class lacks a historical mission to support a transition to democracy; it may or may not side with the politics of democratization. In countries under "dependent capitalist development", the middle class often sides with authoritarian trends.

Like dependency theorists, Immanuel Wallerstein believed that "to understand the internal class contradictions and political struggles of a particular state, we must first situate it in the world-economy."[110] This would help us to understand the interests of "particular groups located within a particular state."[111] Unlike the first generation of the

---

[109] Guillermo A. O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California press, 1979) pp. 85-91
[110] Immanuel Wallerstein, " The Present State of the Debate on World Inequality," in M.A. Seligson and J. T. Passe-Smith (eds.) *Development and Underdevelopment* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), pp. 217-230, p. 221.
[111] Ibid

dependency school, Immanuel Wallerstein believed that the "world system" is no longer polarized, but instead divided into three zones of "core, periphery, and semi-periphery," and the existence of the semi-periphery points to the greater possibility of development in the world system. Although Wallerstein never discussed the correlation between the state position in the world system and democratization, his theory implies that the world system plays a part in the type of political regime. Given its high level of industrialization, the core enjoys a strong and autonomous middle class contributing to its democratic politics. The core needs cheap raw materials and a large market available in the non-core; in return, the corrupt autocratic elites in the non-core receive the core's economic and political support. The export of raw materials and the import of manufacturing goods – mercantilist capitalism – often undermine the growth of an urban, industrialized middle class in the non-core. The alliance between the elites in the non-core (periphery or semi-periphery) and the elites in the core weakens the position of the middle class in the non-core (periphery or semi-periphery). Hence, the world system could jeopardize the growth of the middle class and the rise of democratic politics in the periphery/semi-periphery.

### 3.1.3. Barrington Moore's historical-structuralism

In his classic work, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Barrington Moore introduced a new structural approach in the study of social change and regime transition.[112] Moore's methodology of "historical-structural sociology" sharply differed from the universal, linear approach of modernization theories. Modernization and industrialization, Moore argued, would not necessarily lead to a universal progressive

---

[112] Barrington Moore Jr., *Social origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Press, 1966).

outcome. Routes to modernity vary, and thus democracy may or may not evolve at the end of the road. Three types of political regimes, Moore argued, are the end stations of three different paths. These paths are determined by a complex class coalition between the landlords, the peasantry, and the urban bourgeoisie. A bourgeois revolution leads to capitalist democracy (the United States, England, and France); an abortive bourgeois revolution/conservative revolution leads to fascism (Japan and Germany); and a peasantry revolution leads to communism (Russia and China). Moore's structural approach suggests that the choice for democracy is restricted by socio-political structures of power, and a particular class coalition determines the type of political regime. In fascist and communist regimes a relatively weak urban bourgeoisie and the coalition of the centralized state and the powerful landlord class ruled out any democratic outcomes. Democracy, Moore argued, requires a strong urban bourgeoisie and weak landlord class; it needs a bourgeois revolution. In Moore's own words, "No bourgeoisie, no democracy."[113]

Moore's structural-historical account implies that class structure and the path taken by the social classes in the past determine the future path of democratization. Decisions and/or coalitions made in the past are irreversible; an abortive bourgeois revolution, for instance, would not lead to democracy. Countries cannot escape their own history. Moore's approach is helpful in examining structural-historical difficulties in the path of democratization. It fails, however, to explain why and how democracy emerged in countries in the third wave of democratization with a long history of authoritarian and totalitarian traditions and no record of bourgeois revolution in the past.

---

[113] Moore, *Social origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 418

Moore's structural-historical approach takes a complex and multi-facetted position with respect to the historical mission of class. Like Max Weber and Otto Hintze, Barrington Moore distanced himself from a universalist-linear approach. He adopts a particularistic approach with respect to the role of class in social change, which implies that the path for development and democracy is neither linear (modernization theories) nor staged (Marxist theory). Moore's theory adapts a particularistic and class-collective approach. It is a particularistic approach since it suggests that no class holds a universal historical mission in favour of or against development and democracy. Social classes are not entirely driven by their historical interests; they make different coalitions in different historical contexts. Moore's view adapts a class-collective approach, as it gives more attention to the position of a particular class in the class coalition. The urban bourgeoisie was part of a class coalition both in the democratic and fascist revolutions in Europe. In the former, the participation of the bourgeoisie led to democracy because the bourgeoisie dominated the class coalition. In the latter, the bourgeoisie was subordinated to the state and the landlords. Likewise, the British aristocrats were part of the class coalition leading up to the establishment of a parliamentary democracy.

### 3.1.4. Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens approach: "Three power structure"

Like Barrington Moore's particularistic approach, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Stephens, and John Stephens in *Capitalist Development and Democracy* argue that capitalist development may lead to democracy under a particular class structure. Unlike Moore, however, they make it clear that "it was not capitalist market nor capitalists as the new dominant force, but rather the contradiction of capitalism that

advanced the causes of democracy."[114] It was against this background that they claim the working class, not the urban bourgeoisie, has been the major promoter of democratization since the British Chartism movement. The urban bourgeoisie, they argued, has played an ambiguous role as it has fought only for its own inclusion in the political process and has occasionally opposed the inclusion of the under-classes. The urban bourgeoisie, they observe, served as a junior member of the state-landlords alliance that brought totalitarianism into power in post-First World War Germany, Italy, Austria, and Spain. Hence, the urban bourgeoisie can serve as a social origin of dictatorship; only a class structure with the leadership of the working class can lead to democracy.[115]

Critics have raised a few concerns with respect to Rueschemeyer et al's account of the unique role of the working class in democratization. According to Ruth Berins Collier, like every social class, the working class can be what it wants to be; class action is not determined by a historical mission. In Europe, Collier argues, the working class played a complex role in the politics of democratization, and was an active partner of the middle class in the process of democratization from below. This class, however, played a marginal role in the politics of democratization from above where the power-holders were looking for a new basis of legitimacy through revolts, coups, and mass mobilization. The working class played a key role in the earlier stage of democratization, and a marginal role in the current episode.[116]

Despite its shortcomings, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* takes a significant step in the development of Moore's structural-historical tradition; they begin

---

[114] Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Stephens, and John Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), p.7

[115] Ibid, pp. 5-6.

[116] See Ruth Berins Collier, Paths *Towards Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

where Moore left off. Moore paid little attention to the impact of the structure of the state and the transnational power structure. But Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens introduce a "three power structures" model in which societal change is determined by the interaction of three independent factors: class, state and transnational power structures.[117]

The following study will adopt this "three power structure" model in examining Iran's structural obstacles and opportunities in the transition to democracy. The model is rich and helpful for the following reasons: *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, in spite of all its limitations, has successfully synthesized three rival theories of social change: modernization theories, dependency/world system theories, and Moore's structural-historical approach. It provides us with a wide-ranging structural argument that takes into account the interaction of internal and external structures, and social (class) and political (state) factors. Rueschemeyer, Stephans and Stephans reject both the optimism of modernization theories (linear-universalism), and the pessimism of dependency/world system theories (negative correlations between dependency on the one hand and development and democracy on the other). They follow Moore's particularistic tradition in which a positive correlation exists between capitalist development and democracy only under particular class structures. They advance Moore's historical-structural tradition by including two more structural factors: the state and transnational power. The success of development and democracy depend on the complex interactions between three power structures of class, state and transnational power.[118] Yet like most structural accounts, *Capitalist development and Democracy* pays little attention to the role of political agency

---

[117] Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, pp. 60-70.

[118] Theda Skocpol subscribes to this structural tradition. See Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in P.B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

in social change and regime transformation. This brings us to the following section, where we will examine the rise of the second generation of democratization theories: the voluntarist theories.

### 3.2. Voluntarism: actor-centred approach

The practice of post-1970's democratic transitions led to the rise of the second generation of democratization theories and shifted the focus from structuralism to voluntarism. This theoretical turn was due to the new practice of contemporary democratization in which democracy evolved in countries without the presence of all the structural conditions required for democratic transition. The new generation of democratisation theorists argued that political agency can make a significant difference, given the absence of the required level of development and immaturity of capitalism, the ineffectiveness of class coalitions, and the effective acts of individual elites in recent democratic transitions. The actor-centred school, Adam Przeworski argues, was a reaction to the mechanistic approach of the early modernization theories in which individual roles remained unnoticed.[119] The school was a strong calling for the role of wise politicians to by-pass all structural obstacles in the transition to democracy. These theorists, identified as the "transitologists," give more credit to individual agency, leadership skills, and the choice and strategies of political elites in democratic transition. The transition period, they argue, is a moment of political uncertainty in which countries can escape their past and transform the present into an uncertain future. Democratic transition is a political game. All that is needed is a group of wise political elites who

---

[119] Adam Przeworski, "Some Problems in the Study of Transition to Democracy," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, eds., G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter, L. Whitehead (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986).

know what, when, and how to act.[120] Democracy, Doh Shin argued, "is no longer treated as a particularly rare and delicate plant that cannot be transplanted in alien soil; it is treated as a product that can be manufactured wherever there is democratic craftsmanship and the proper zeitgeist."[121] Transition to democracy is bound, to use O'Donnell and Schmitter's concept, by "structuralist indeterminacy", and the elite's strategic choice would determine the outcomes.[122]

The voluntarism of the transitologists is a reductionist approach for two reasons: first, Jean Grugel observes that it "does not explain adequately why outcomes are different, except by presuming inadequate leadership styles or the adoption of incorrect policies." In other words, "when democratizations go wrong it is, by implication, because individuals 'get it wrong.'"[123] This approach reduces the success or failure of democratic transition to some psychological factors and renders structures irrelevant. Second, it underestimates the role of civil society, as a strong and active civil society, transitologists argue, may or may not serve democratization. The transitologists admit that the Solidarity Movement in Poland, the student movement in South Korea, and mass mobilization or, to use O'Donnell and Schmitter's concept, the "resurrection of civil society"[124] in the Philippines, Argentina, and Chile were conducive to the politics of democratization. But

---

[120] See G. A. O'Donnell and P.C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986); Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); D. A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Towards a Dynamic Model," in L. Anderson, ed., *Transition to Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); T.L. Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," in D.A. Rustow and P.K. Erickson, eds., *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 163-191; and G. Di Palma, *To Crafts democracies: AN Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
[121] Doh C. Shin, "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research," *World Politics* 47 (1994) no. 1:135-170, p. 141.
[122] O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, p.49
[123] Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, p. 61.
[124] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, p. 48.

civil society movement is helpful as long as it is controlled by the elites. A strong and independent civil society, T. L. Karl observes, could hinder a successful democratic transition since the acts of civil society are not consistently predictable. The regime hardliners are likely to jeopardize the process of democratization if the demands of civil society exceed the capability of the regime's softliners.[125] To the transitologists, the primary actors are individual elites, and civil society is of secondary importance. This reductionist assumption ignores the fact that the success of democratic transition, as John Markoff observes, depends on the interaction between social movements (civil society actors) and the elite reformists.[126] The pressure from below (civil society) provides invaluable soft power to be used in the negotiation from above (the negotiation of softliners with hardliners). Last but not least, in non-democratic countries where democratic institutions are weak, civil society organizations could serve as multifunctional organs. They could educate and also aggregate the citizens' interests where party politics is weak. Iran's third wave, as will be discussed in this study, provides evidence regarding the significance of civil society.

### 3.2.1. Structuralism vs. Voluntarism

Structuralism and voluntarism differ in two fundamental ways: first, conceptually they hold different views on the notion of structure and agency. Second, practically, they pursue different strategies for democratization. Conceptually, the structuralists, Mahoney and Snyder argue, view structures as "generative forces that define actors' interests and

---

[125] See Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," in D.A. Rustow and P.K. Erickson, eds., *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives*, p. 173.
[126] John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change.*

directly determine their behaviour."[127] The voluntarists do not deny the existence of structures, but view them as "barriers external to actors which may or may not stand between them."[128] Actors, they argue, "pre-exist structures in that they have interests and identities prior to encountering structural constraints."[129] Hence, there exist historical momentums like those of transitional periods where human agency is capable of transforming macro-structural obstacles into opportunities. During regime transitions, O'Donnell and Schmitter argue, structures are "looser" and "their impacts more indeterminate, than in normal circumstances."[130]

According to the structuralists, the interests and identity of human agency are determined and defined by its position within the social structure.[131] The structuralists do not deny the importance of human agency, but for them human agency is a "collective" concept; agencies such as class or state act not individually but collectively.[132] "At the core of structuralism," James Mahoney argues, "is the concern with analyzing objective relationships between groups and societies. Structuralism holds that configurations of social relations shape, constrain, and empower actors in predictable ways."[133] In contrast, the voluntarists perceive the interests and identity of human agency as external to the "objective" social structures. During regime transitions, O'Donnell and Schmitter argue, "it is almost impossible to specify which classes, sectors, institutions, and other groups

---

[127] James Mahoney and Richard Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 34 (1999): 3-32, p. 2.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] See O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, p.5, quoted in Mahoney and Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," p. 2.
[131] Mahoney and Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," p. 2.
[132] Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, p. 55.
[133] James Mahoney, "Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research," in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 151.

will take what role, opt for what issues or support what alternative." One therefore should not, they argue, "rely on relatively stable economic, social, cultural, and partisan categories to identify, analyze, and evaluate identities and strategies of those defending the statues quo and those struggling to reform or transform it."[134]

To the voluntarists, human agency, write Mahoney and Snyder, is "the consequence of actors' subjective evaluations of uncertain objective conditions." These subjective goals "may or may not correspond to their 'objective' socioeconomic positions."[135] It is these subjective goals, O'Donnell and Schmitter argue, which divide human actors into regime hardliners and softliners, and the radical and moderate opposition.[136] It is within this concept of structure and agency that democratic transition, writes O'Donnell and Schmitter, is nothing more than a "contingent institutional compromise."[137] This argument implies that the actors' subjective evaluations may or may not fit democratic norms, but objective conditions could push them to side with democratic movements. The regime softliners may or may not have strong commitments to democratic values; all they need to do is to persuade the hardliners that there is more to gain from compromise than conflict with democratic movements.

Each regime transition is unique, since human agency remains unique and distinctive. Each regime transition, it is argued, could hardly fall into universal conditions determined by worldwide structural factors. In other words, regime transitions are times

---

[134] O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, p.4, quoted in Mahoney and Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," p. 2
[135] Mahoney and Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," p. 3.
[136] O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, pp. 15-17-63, quoted in Mahoney and Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," p. 3.
[137] [137] O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, p. 59, quoted in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, p. 63.

of uncertainty as structures no longer function effectively; on this momentum when almost anything is possible, talented individuals can play a unique role in regime transition.[138] During the uncertainty of regime transition, Karl and Schmitter argue, "outcomes depend less on objective conditions...than on subjective evaluations surrounding unique strategic choices."[139]

Next to the conceptual difference over the definition and the function of structure and agency, voluntarism and structuralism differ on the practice of democratization. Different theoretical approaches result in opposite views on the strategies and tools required for regime transition. Structuralism advances a social strategy aiming at creating social conditions conducive to democratization. It pushes for a greater distribution of economic, intellectual and other social power resources. It relies heavily on the role of social agents such as a strong middle class or organized working classes. Voluntarism, by contrast, emphasises political factors such as leadership and political institution. The goal in this strategy, Tatu Vanhanen argues, is to adapt "political institutions to their social environment in such a way that it becomes easier for competing groups to share power and institutionalize the sharing of power."[140]

---

[138] O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, pp.3-5, quoted in Mahoney and Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," p. 4.

[139] Terry Lynn Karl and Phillip C. Schmitter, "Modes of Transitions in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe," *International Social Science Journal* 128 (May 1991): 271.

[140] Tatu Vanhanen, *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States, 1980-88* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), p. 165.

### 3.2.2. Political conditions for a successful democratic transition: "the four-player game"

The political strategy of voluntarism is a game transition whose outcome is determined by the position of political elites and opposition. Transition to democracy, Alfred Stepan argues, is "in game theoretical terms a four-player game involving 'regime moderates', 'regime hardliners', 'opposition moderates', and 'opposition hardliners.'"[141] The regime hardliners protect the status quo while the regime softliners encourage change; they are eager to cooperate with the opposition moderates toward democratic transition. The opposition moderates are willing to cooperate with the regime softliners, while the opposition hardliners are reluctant to compromise; they view the entire regime as illegitimate and make no distinction between the regime hardliners and softliners.

A successful democratic transition depends largely on the vulnerability of both the regime and the opposition hardliners. It also equally depends on the strength of either the regime or opposition moderates. Transition games in non-democratic contexts, Alfred Stepan argues, can be "full four-player pacts" if two conditions are satisfied:

> The moderate players in the regime must have sufficient autonomy so that they can, over time, conduct strategic as well as tactical negotiations with the players from the moderate opposition. Likewise, the moderates in the opposition need a degree of continued organizational presence, power and followers in the polity to play their part in the negotiation pacts.[142]

Not every non-democratic regime is capable of democratic transition. The four most common ideal-types of non-democratic regimes, Stepan suggests, are "sultanistic

---

[141] Alfred Stepan, *Arguing comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 168. For further discussions, see Adam Przeworski, "The Games of Transition," in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and Samuel Valenzuela (eds.), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 105-53; Adam Przeworski, ( 1991..), p.68.

[142] Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics*, p. 168

regimes", "totalitarian regimes", "weakened authoritarian regimes", and "mature post-totalitarian regimes." Of the four, only the latter two regimes meet the conditions required for a four-player game transition: the "weakened authoritarian regimes" such as Spain and Brazil in the mid-1970s and the "'mature' post-totalitarian regime" of Hungry in 1988-9 and the communist authoritarian-military regime of Poland in the late 1980's."[143] The first two regimes, sultanism and totalitarianism, are absolutely short of such conditions.[144] Sultanism, to follow the Weberian approach, is an extreme form of patrimonialism. "In sultanism," Stepan argues,

> the private and the public are fused, there is a strong tendency towards family power and dynastic succession, there is no distinction between a state career and personal services to the ruler; there is a lack of rationalized impersonal ideology, economic success depends on the ruler and most of all, the ruler acts only according to his own unchecked discretion, with no larger impersonal goals for the state.[145]

A regime close to the sultanistic ideal type is far from having a pacted transition, because two moderate players on the part of the regime and of the opposition are absent. "How can there be room in the 'household' staff of the sultan for a moderate player who publicly negotiates the demise of his employer?" Moreover, writes Stepan, "neither civil society nor political society has enough autonomy to enable a publicly organized democratic opposition to develop sufficient negotiating capacity for it to be a full-player in any pact-transition."[146] This was the case in Iran's revolutionary transition from the Shah's sultanistic regime in 1979.

---

[143] Ibid, pp. 170-71.

[144] Ibid, pp. 170-7. For an insightful discussion about the typology of regimes, see Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transitions and Consolidation: Southern Europe, Southern America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), chapter 3.

[145] Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics*, pp. 169-170

[146] Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics*, p. 170

The regime is close to an ideal typical totalitarian regime, Stepan argues, if it "has eliminated almost all pre-existing political, economic and social pluralism, has a unified, articulated, guiding utopian ideology, has intensive and extensive mobilization and has a leadership that rules, often charismatically, with undefined limits and great unpredictability for elites and non-elites alike."[147] Like sultanism, totalitarianism is short of "the two key players for a pacted transition," because

> no totalitarian ruler will allow 'regime moderates' to exist who have sufficient autonomy to conduct strategies and tactical negotiations with opposition moderates. And just as emphatically, there can be no moderate opposition players with sufficient organizational presence and followers in the polity to have enough power to negotiate their way into a transition pact. At best, therefore, an ideal-typical totalitarian regime is a two player (non) game. There is a big player (the hardliner maximum leader and his party-state-staff) and possibly an underground opposition (half a player?) that can struggle to exist and possibly resist but with absolutely no capacity to negotiate a pacted transition and, in any case, has no player to negotiate with."[148]

Iran's post-revolutionary regime fits in none of the four types of the regimes. It is neither a "weakened authoritarian regime" nor a "mature post-totalitarian regime," since the residual ideological legacy of *Khomeinism* is still alive. The regime is neither close to an ideal type of "sultanism" nor "totalitarianism," as it retains some elements of democratic procedures and exhibits a serious elites' factional politics. Iran's post-revolutionary polity, to use Stepan's analytical concept, is an "'early' post-totalitarian regime", a post-totalitarian polity which is premature for a successful democratic transition. Given the lasting effect of totalitarian regimes, "'early' post-totalitarian regimes," writes Stepan, "do not have sufficient diversity and autonomy in the ruling

---

[147] Ibid, p. 169

[148] Ibid

party-state leadership or sufficient strength and autonomy within the democratic opposition to produce all the players needed to conduct successfully a four-player transition game."[149]

### 3.2.3. Four formats in four-player transition games

The game transition might occur in the four following formats.[150] First, if the regime hardliners and the opposition hardliners dominate the field, the result will be either repression or revolution, depending on the strength of the regime or of the opposition. The 1979 Iranian Revolution is a classic example, where the old authoritarian regime is replaced with a radical non-democratic one. Because the regime moderates and the opposition moderates were weak or absent, the old regime hardliners were replaced with the opposition hardliners, and the old authoritarianism with a new one.

Second, with no significant help from the moderate opposition or civil society and no tension among the elites on the top, the regime moderates may prove stronger than the moderate opposition and unilaterally initiate a regime democratic transition. In this case, Stepan argues, "redemocratization [is] initiated from within the authoritarian regime,"[151] since the regime moderates realize that their long-tem interests would be better served by

---

[149] According to Alfred Stepan, when an 'early' post-totalitarian regime such as East Germany in 1989 or a 'frozen' post-totalitarian regime such as Czechoslovakia from 1968 to 1989 faces a sudden crisis of opposition, these regimes are particularly vulnerable to *collapse* if they are not able to repress the opposition because the early or frozen post-totalitarian regime's have a limited negotiating capability. In both cases a radically changed external context drastically altered domestic power relations. See Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics*, p. 170.

[150] The notion of "four-player transition game" focuses only on the internal players (hardliners and softliners of the regime and the opposition), but does not refer to the external players. In post- September 11, 2001 one could refer to the cases of external hardliners moving towards regime change. Afghanistan and Iraq are two cases where two external hardliners (Bin Laden and President George W. Bush) played a central role towards regime change.

[151] Alfred Stepan, "Paths toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations," in G. O'Donnell and P. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 72.

change towards democracy. Huntington calls this "transformation."[152] This is the

equivalent of Linz "*reforma*" and Linz-Stepan's "*reforma-pactada*."[153] The cases of

Spain (1976-79), Brazil (1985-88), Chile (1989), and Romania (1989) fall into this

category.

Third, if the regime moderates and the opposition moderates are strong and skilful

enough to convince the regime hardliners of a compromise, a peaceful democratic

transition might be achieved. This process would be, to use O'Donnell and Schmitter's

phrase, a "pacted" transition,[154] or, to use Huntington's word, "transplacement."[155] Such

countries as Bolivia (1979-80), Uruguay (1982-85), and South Korea (1985-87), among

others, experienced this form of transition.

Fourth, the old regime might, peacefully or violently, collapse and be replaced

with democracy when moderate opposition dominates the field. Huntington calls this

"replacement",[156] Linz "*ruptura*."[157] This occurred in Portugal (1975), Greece (1974),

and Argentina (1983). Likewise, during the late 1980's and early 1990's, regime

transitions in Central and Eastern Europe from Poland to Hungary to East Germany to

Czechoslovakia fell into this category. In some countries - Poland, Hungary, and the

Czech Republic – regimes were transformed into constitutional democracies. In others –

like Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania – they turned into electoral democracy. In either

case, however, the political change resulted from a mishmash of reform and revolutionary

---

[152] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, pp. 113-114.
[153] J. Linz, "Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibrium," in Linz and Alfred Stepan, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 35.
[154] G. O'Donnell and P. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), chapter 4.
[155] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, pp. 113-114.
[156] Ibid
[157] Juan J. Linz, "Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibrium," p. 35

elements in which the regimes were transformed through a relatively peaceful process. Timothy Garton Ash has called this a "refolution,"[158] where dialogues and communication between the oppositional civil society and the political elites brought about peaceful regime transition. This corresponds to Charles Tilly's argument respecting a clear distinction between revolutionary conditions and revolutionary outcomes. Although the regime transformation in Central and Eastern Europe took place under non-revolutionary conditions, Tilly viewed the outcomes as revolutionary.[159] Furthermore, this strategy, in Vitali Silitski's phrase, can also be identified as "pre-empting democracy", as recently took place in "Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution, Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution, and the Tulip Revolution that ousted Kyrgyz president Askar Akayev following rigged February 2005 parliamentary elections."[160] Iran's second wave under Mosaddeq's leadership (1951-53) resembles this path, since it combined a reformist path with revolutionary outcomes. This short-lived democratic experience was thus a "refolution."

The game transition often becomes complicated when, to use Scott Mainwaring's words, there are no "linkages between elites and masses."[161] In all cases the regime softliners are "liberalizers," while the oppositional social forces belong to the camp of the "democratizers." The former "wish to reduce the repressive features of the old system in order to enhance its performance," while the latter wish to bring some fundamental

---

[158] Timothy Garton Ash, "Refolution," in Timothy Garton Ash ed., *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the fate of Central Europe* (Vintage, 1990), pp. 309-24.

[159] Charles Tilly, European Revolution: 1492-1992 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

[160] Vitali Silitski, "Preempting Democracy: The Case of Belarus," *Journal of Democracy* 16.4 (2005) 83-97, p. 83.

[161] Scott Mainwaring, "Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical and Comparative Issues," in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and Samuel Valenzuela eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dam: Notre Dam University Press, 1992), 294-341, p. 303.

change in the state structure.[162] The former often discourage social movements and keep civil society forces at bay, while the latter promote social movements and mobilize civil society forces to change the status quo. The "liberalizers" in Iran's reformist government under President Khatami (1997-2005) had realized that their long-term interests would be better served by some change, but remained both unable and unwilling to mobilize civil society forces to bring about democracy. This resulted in liberalization without democratization, and contributed to the failure of the reformist government.

### 3.2.4. The affinity of social movements with democratization

According to Charles Tilly, four general processes promote democratization; they include "increases in the sheer number of people available for participation in public politics, equalization of resources and connections among those people, insulation of public policies from existing social inequalities, and integration of interpersonal trust networks into public policies."[163] The same four factors, writes Tilly, "promote the formation of social movements" since they encourage the establishment of various forms of "associations, public meetings, demonstrations" and institutions such as political parties and labour unions.[164] The major question is when and how social movements promote democratization. For Tilly, this happens when "they broaden the range of participants in public politics, equalize the weight of participants in public policies, erect barriers to the direct translation of categorical inequalities into public policies, and/or increase previously segmented trust networks into public policies."[165] The failure of Iran's reformist government, as will be discussed in this study, suggests that a successful

---

[162] Mary Ellen Fischer, "Introduction," in Mary Ellen Fischer, ed., *Establishing Democracy* (Boulder: Westview, 1996), p.8.
[163] Charles Tilly, *Social Movements*, p. 136.
[164] Ibid, pp. 137-38.
[165] Charles Tilly, *Social Movements*, p. 143.

democratic transition in Iran depends in part on the role of social movements and civil society forces. The reformist government ignored this fact and failed to deliver the four processes of democratization. Hence, the people's participation was decreased, the public resources remained un-equalized, the existing social inequalities were not fully insulated into public policies, and the people lost their trust in the reformists.

## 4. Conclusion: Dialectics of Structure and Agency

Political "procedural liberal democracy" as introduced by Dahl and Linz offers *only* a limited version of democracy. It helps to the extent that it proposes a minimal base for a transition to democracy, providing us with a practical and feasible path to begin. This version of democracy is problematic as it pays little attention to socio-cultural elements of democracy. It is in this context 'societal empowerment' and 'social justice' remain central in the success and stability of democracy.

Having discussed the two top theoretical literatures on regime transformation we now turn to the third generation in the literature. This generation, as James Mahoney and Richard Snyder observe, represents an integrative approach in which elements of structuralism and voluntarism, or structure and human agency, are synthesized.[166] In this approach, democratization, as Ruth Berins Collier argues, is at once a class-based project and a political-strategic process in which class structure, elites, and institutions work together.[167] Similarly, Samuel Huntington attempts to make a bridge between the historical and structural "causes" and the "causers" of democracy, which correspond to

---

[166]James Mahoney and Richard Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," *Studies in Comparative International Development* (1999) 34: 3-32, p. 1.
[167] See Ruth Berins Collier, Paths *Towards Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

the actors and agential factors.[168] By the same token, Juan L. Linz and Alfred Stepan suggest that a society's structural characteristics "constitute a series of opportunities and constraints for the social and political actors;" and yet, "those actors have certain choices that can increase or decrease the probability of the persistence and stability of a regime."[169] From this integrative perspective, "structures both enable and limit human agency;" they "operate as environments that delimit the range of possible actions without determining action. From this perspective, "people act through structures, rather than structures acting through people." In other words, "actors can choose how to use structural resources and potentially improve these resources."[170] On this view, social conditions are not the ultimate causal factor. Human choices and the very concept of leadership suggest that political agents can make a significant difference in democratic transition.[171] Political agency, however, is very much affected by the balance of power, both among social and political forces. Democratic transition, as Tatu observes, "will take place under conditions in which power resources are so widely distributed that no [social or political] group is any longer able to suppress its competitors or to maintain its hegemony."[172]

On this synthetic and dialectical view, individuals, ideas, and, to use Barrington Moore's words, "cultural values do not descend from heaven to influence the course of

---

[168] See Samuel P. Huntington, *Third wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century*. Norman, Okla: University f Oklahoma Press, 1991.

[169] Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978) p. 4.

[170] Mahoney and Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," p. 13.

[171] The lack of democracy in several rich countries and the existence of democracy in several poor nations suggest that Lipset and other early-modernization theorists overestimated the role of socio-economic conditions in a transition to democracy. See Vanhanen Tatu, *Prospects of Democracy: A Study of 172 Countries* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 194-5

[172] Vanhanen Tatu, *Prospects of Democracy: A Study of 172 Countries*, p.191.

history."[173] They are rooted in and influenced by social structures. Yet, "if you ever doubted the importance of the individual in history," writes Timothy Garton Ash, "consider the story of Khomeini": An old man who invented a new and modern political system founded on an old and apolitical concept of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of jurist). This political system, which would not exist without him, is *"Khomeinism."*[174] This study employs such an integrative and synthetic approach to examine the complexity and difficulties of democratization under *Khomeinism*.

---

[173] Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 486
[174] Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam," in *New York Tim*, October 2005, <http://www.nybooks.com/contents/20051103>

# CHAPTER TWO

## Iran: Three Waves of Democratization

### 1. Introduction

Broadly speaking, Iran's encounter with modernity and the eagerness of Iranians for democracy produced three waves of democratization. These waves surfaced in the form of two revolutions and two reform movements. The first revolution was the 1905 Constitutional Revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century. The second revolution, the 1979 Revolution, took place in the closing decades of the twentieth century. The former was a response to Qajar's arbitrary despotism,[175] while the latter was a reaction to Pahlavi's petrolic despotism.[176] They both challenged the politics of sultanism. The revolutions overthrew the Qajar and the Pahlavi sultanistic and despotic dynasties. Yet, the old forms of Qajar's "patrimonialism" and of Pahlavi's "neo-patrimonialism" were reproduced in the post-revolutionary polities, creating anti-democratic waves.

The anti-democratic waves were eventually challenged by new waves of democratization: two reform movements emerged in order to return to the original revolutionary goals. In the early 1950s, Mosaddeq's Oil Nationalization Movement set the stage for democratic reform, liberating both politics and economy from state rentierism and foreign exploitation. This movement sought to establish parliamentary democracy by reviving "the rule of law," (*hokumat-e qanun*) – the most basic concept of

---

[175] For a thoughtful discussion on this subject, see Ervand Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism: The Case of Qajar Iran," *Middle Eastern Studies* vol. 5, 1974, 3-31.

[176] For more discussions on the nature of the Pahlavi State, see Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926-1979* (*New* York: New York University Press, 1981).

the modern state that was central to Iran's first wave in the 1905 Constitutional Revolution. Like the 1905 Revolution, however, the reform movement did not succeed; the first and the second waves failed.

Three decades later, Iran's third democratic wave and the second revolution appeared. The 1979 revolution institutionalized paradoxically a unique modern theocratic constitution based on Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* (the guardianship of the jurist). Ayatollah Khomeini injected a new meaning into an old Shiite concept of *velayat-e faqih*, bringing a radical break from tradition. The absolute rule of the jurist soon appeared to be incompatible with the rule of law – the principle of modern legal and rational authority.[177] Yet, the first and the second *governments* in post-revolutionary Iran managed to cast a shadow on contradictions intrinsic to the politics of *Khomeinism*. The third *government* did not: massive demographic and other structural socio-cultural changes, together with the oil recession in the late 1990s, contributed to the development of factional politics in the republic, which eventually divided *Khomeinism* into camps of clerical authoritarianism and political reform. The unexpected election in May 1997 of President Muhammad Khatami turned out to be a tremendous boost to Iran's third wave of democratization.[178] Interestingly, the major reform discourse revolved around the same principle of the rule of law, which had been employed in all of Iran's waves of democratizations over the past century. Nonetheless, Khatami's discourse on the rule of law and constitutionalism was manipulated and blocked by the clerical authority. The fall

---

[177] For Max Weber's ideas about three types of authority and legitimacy, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 3 vols. vol. 2, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds., trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968) 212-216, and Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H.H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, eds. and trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

[178] Said Amir Arjomand, "Democratization and the Constitutional Politics of Iran since 1997," *Polish Sociological Review* 4.136 (2001):349.

of the third *government* and the rise of the fourth *government* raised the question whether working within the constitutional framework (constitutionalism) or pushing for a radical and structural change would eventually make the third wave a success. This chapter provides a historical context for understanding the current democratic movement in Iran. It examines the legacy and lessons of Iran's first and second waves of democratization, but offers a general framework for the third wave to be discussed in the following chapters.

## 2. Iran's First Wave (1820's-1911)

Iran's initial attempt to challenge despotism and to achieve a limited degree of freedom coincided with the first global wave of democratization (1828-1926). After the fall of the Safavid Empire (1500-1722) and demise of two major but short-lived dynasties of the Afshars and Zands, the Qajars seized power in 1796 and ruled for over a century. Under the Qajars the first two reform initiatives in Iran's first wave were top-down reforms. Abbas Mirza's attempts and Amir Kabir's initiatives for reforms amounted to reinforcing and challenging state power. They reinforced the power of a modern centralised state to reform state-society relations, and challenged the patrimonial structure of the state, making it more transparent and functional. By contrast, the second two democratic initiatives in the first wave were bottom-up reforms: The 1891 Tobacco Movement and the 1905 Constitutional Revolution resembled some form of social movements.

### 2.1. Reforms in the first wave

The first attempt for reform and modernization came after a series of military defeats in the Perso-Russian war and was initiated by Abbas Mirza, the chief of the army

and the heir of the second Qajar king, Fath-Ali Shah (1797-1834). The new army was modelled on the Ottoman army. Under Abass Mirza's leadership the first printing press came out and the first group of students were sent to Europe. The most significant feature of the reform was his initiation of a series of bureaucratic reforms including cutting the Royal Court salaries, reforming the salary system of the bureaucrats, and protecting the interests of the merchants and manufactures by raising tariffs. However, the reform of the state itself did not succeed, as it went against the interests of both the Court and two influential super powers, Great Britain and Russia. The reform was later revived under the ministry of Mirza Taghi Khan, known as Amir Kabir. He established military industries, sent students and workers to Europe, and reconstructed the army. Amir Kabir's most significant contribution was to reform the dominant state culture of tribalism and patrimonialism. The Qajar state-bureaucracy was dominated by the Shah and his loyal family. Amir Kabir replaced many corrupt bureaucrats, cut some royal family's income, arranged the tax policies, set new import-export regulations, and developed a new judicial system. Amir's goal was to make the state centralized and, to some degree, accountable; this required reform of the judicial system controlled by the clergy *(ulama)* and the *shari'a* law. The *ulama* began to challenge Amir Kabir's reform as he established the first secular Iranian college of technical, medical, and military instruction called *Dar al-Fonoun*. He also published the first modern Iranian newspaper called *Vaghaye-e Etefaghiyeh*. While Amir's reforms met with limited success, the three pillars of the counter-reform were more successful: The Court, the *ulama*, and the two imperial powers convinced the Shah to remove the Amir. Amir's 39- month leadership came to an end when the Shah ordered his covert assassination.

## 2.2. Revolutionary movements in the first wave

The 1891 'Tobacco Movement' was the first successful social movement in modern Iran, which challenged both colonial interests and the Shah's despotic, arbitrary rule. In 1889, the Qajar monarch, Nasir al-Din Shah, and the English company of Imperial Tobacco Corporation made a preliminary agreement on the 'tobacco concession' in which a monopoly of the sale and distribution of Iranian tobacco, inside and outside Iran, was given to the British company. In return the Iranian government was to receive 15,000 pounds per year. The bazaari-merchants were the first social group who challenged the concession and asked for the *ulama*'s support to mobilize the urban population against the concession. In addition to many *ulama* inside Iran, one of the greatest Shiite religious leaders residing in Iraq, Mirza-Hasan Shirazi, declared a *fatwa* by which "the use of tobacco in any form was considered as war against the Hidden Imam and forbidden." According to Keddie, "in December 1891 the movement culminated in an amazingly successful nationwide boycott on the sale and use of tobacco, observed even by the Shah's wives and by non-Muslims."[179] The people responded positively to the *fatwa*: they boycotted the use of tobacco and protested against the concession. The public protest forced the Shah to cancel the entire concession in 1892. "The movement," as Keddie observes, "was the first successful mass protest in modern Iran, combining *ulama*, modernists, merchants, and ordinary townspeople in a coordinated move against government policy."[180] The Tobacco Movement turned out to be a critical juncture in modern Iranian history, because the two most significant traditional-social forces of civil society, the *ulama* and the bazaaris, successfully worked together against the state.

---

[179] Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 60.
[180] Ibid, p. 62

Likewise, the coalition of the same social forces, i.e. the "*mullah*-merchant marriage," was conducive to the rise of Iran's 1905 Constitutional Revolution.

The Constitutional Revolution begun in 1905, achieved a political victory in 1906, and lasted until 1911. On April 26, 1905, conflict between a group of bazaaris and the Governor of Tehran sparked a public protest. The *ulama* supported the bazaaris and pushed for further protests. For the first time protesters demanded the establishment of the House of Justice (*Adalat-khaneh*). At the beginning of March 1906, Ayatollah Tabatabi, a leading constitutionalist cleric, called for the establishment of the *Majles* (the parliament). On August 5, 1906, the Shah issued a decree (*farman*) ordering the Prime Minster to set up a national consultative assembly (*majles-e shura-ye melli*), which was opened in October 1906. Iran's first Constitutional Law was signed by Mozaffar al-Din Shah in December 1906 when he was mortally ill and weak; a longer supplementary Constitutional Law was signed by his successor, Mohammad-Ali Shah. "These two documents, based largely on the Belgian constitution," writes Keddie, "formed the core of the first Iranian constitution until its replacement in 1979."[181] The intent of the constitution was to establish a parliamentary democracy. However, not surprisingly constitutionalism meant different things to different groups: few were clear on the meaning of constitutionalism, and the function and extent of the *Majles* authority.

By mid-December 1907, the (new) Qajar ruler, Mohammad Ali Shah, decided to restore Qajar despotism. The decline of royal authority in the future structure of the government, the spontaneous growth of political and militant revolutionary associations (*anjomans*), the ensuing chaos, the assassination of the Shah's brutal premier, Atabak, and an unsuccessful attempt on the Shah's life, had worried the Shah. On August 31,

---

[181] Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 68.

1907, the same date Atabak was killed, the British and the Russians signed a treaty to divide Iran into three spheres of influence, while Iran was never informed about this agreement. Britain and Russia took advantage of Iran's internal chaos and divided the country into three spheres of influence: Russia took northern and central Iran, including the capital city of Tehran, while Britain got southeast Iran, and an area in between remained a neural sphere. The Shah was determined to take advantage of this new situation to restore despotism and to end the revolutionary era. Islam and the *sharia* law was a pretext for the Shah to attack constitutionalism.

The ultraconservative Ayatollah, Sheykh Fazlollah Nouri, who had joined other constitutionalist *ulama*, was frightened off by the modern secular radicals whose vision of constitutionalism, the Ayatollah believed, resembled that of the infidel West. As a result he became the champion of the rule of the *sharia*, not the rule of law. He sought the '*mashrou'eh*', not the '*mashrouteh*'. It brought the Shah and the Sheykh closer together and made them allies against constitutionalism, and they soon joined together against the movement; this counter-revolutionary coalition was backed by the Russian colonial power. The Shah first refused to co-operate, and then bombarded the first *Majles*; he banned all the revolutionary associations and provincial assemblies, arrested and executed some of the constitutionalists, and eventually restored the autocracy in June 1908.[182]

The counterrevolutionaries were in power from June 1908 to July 1909.[183] In July 1909 the constitutionalists regained victory when a coalition of Azari popular forces known as *Mojahedin* or *Fada'iyan* lead by Sattar Khan and Baqer Khan and the

---

[182] Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 38-39
[183] Ibid. p. 48

constitutionalist forces of the Bakhtiari tribe, liberated Tehran. The Shah as a result was overthrown, the Sheykh was hanged, and the second *Majles* was elected. With the two parties of the moderate-nationalists (*Etedaliyoun*) and the social democrats (*Ejtema'eyoun*) in the *Majles*, Iranians sought and achieved limited parliamentary politics. The *Majles* hired an American expert, Morgan Shuster, to reform Iran's financial system. At this point in Iranian history American involvement was welcomed as a counterbalance to Russian and British involvement, who saw this as a threat to their sphere of influence. In October 1911, Britain occupied southern Iran, and in November Russia occupied northern Iran, delivered a three point ultimatum, and demanded the dismissal of Morgan Shuster. The *Majles* first refused the ultimatum, but as Russian troops advanced toward Tehran the Prime Minster accepted the ultimatum, which led the Shah and loyal tribal regents to shut down the second *Majles*. A combination of internal forces including the regents, and external factors such as Russian support for the Shah, helped the Shah to regain his throne in 1911. In the first counterrevolutionary phase, clericalism, Ayatollah Nuri's pro-*sharia* trends, helped the Shah, while in the second phase tribalism and Russian imperialism restored the Shah's reign. Because the second phase was not based on clericalism, it was completely "non-ideological."[184] "Whereas internal reaction had closed down the First National Assembly," writes Abrahamian, "foreign pressures led to the dissolution of the Second National Assembly."[185] The revolution came to an end in July 1911.

---

[184] Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 49
[185] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 109.

## 2.3. The first wave: roots and results

Iran's first wave is also identified as Iran's "Era of Awakening" (*Asr-e Bidari*); it began in the early nineteenth century and ended with the failure of Iran's Constitutional Revolution in 1911. The winds of change came from many international sources, not just the West, and influenced the elites and intellectuals. The ideas of progress and constitutional politics came from the West (France and England), Russia, India, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire. The elites and intellectuals were deeply inspired by the idea and practice of parliamentary democracy in England, the idea of social justice and social democracy introduced by the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party,[186] the ideals of liberty and equality of the French Revolution, the demand for the rule of law in the Russian Revolution of 1905, and the Meiji Movement in Japan. The Iranian newspapers – *Habl al-Matin* in Calcutta, *Sorraya* and *Hekmat* in Cairo, *Akhtar* in Istanbul, and *Qanun* in London – were published in exile and smuggled to Iran; they brought new ideas and news to the attention of the elites and intellectuals.[187]

Iran was never a colony, and yet it remained under the influence of Britain and Russia. In the previous century, Russia easily defeated Iran in two wars and imposed two humiliating treaties of *Gulistan* (1813) and *Turkamanchai* (1828) on the Iranian state. Iran thus lost Georgia, Armenia, the Caspian navy; paid 3,000,000 pounds compensation, and granted several commercial capitulations. Similarly, Britain invaded southern Iran following the imposition of the 1857 Treaty of Paris. As a result, Iran gave up all its

---

[186] The Iranian Social Democratic Party, formed in 1905, was modeled based on the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party. In 1908 the Iranian social democrats corresponded with European socialists such as Karl Kautsky. See Janet Afary, *The Iranian constitutional revolution, 1906-1911: grassroots democracy, social democracy, & the origins of feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 240-48.

[187] For a detailed discussion on this episode, see Mehdi Malekzadeh, *Tarikhe Enghelabe Mashroute Iran [History of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran]* (Tehran: Elmi Publisher, 1363/1984) and Yahya Dowlatabadi, *Hayete Yahya [The Life of Yahya]* (Tehran: Ferdowsi Publisher, 1361/1982).

claims to Afghanistan and granted commercial capitulations to Britain. These military defeats led to diplomatic concessions, produced commercial capitulations, "paved the way for economic penetration," undermined the traditional economy and eventually caused extensive "social dislocations."[188] The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and the unexpected victory of Japan over Russia, an Asian country over a European imperial power, encouraged the elite and the public to press for change. It was believed that Japan's victory over Russia would have not been possible without a constitutional government in Japan.

Equally important at this time was the impact of the integration of Iran into the global economy and the Western world. The convergence with the West introduced telegraph lines, more roads, newspapers, and more educated individuals. These social and economic changes eventually led to growing demands for political reform. The concessions, the economic penetration of the West, and the failure of government to protect local manufacturers, challenged the interests of the 'traditional middle class' of the bazaar. Similarly, the *ulama* were threatened by both Western penetration and the expansion of the state's power. Pressured by their bazaari allies, the *ulama* sought to restrict state power in order to protect their interests and influence. The clergy's position on socio-political change was ambiguous and often divided. Seyyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi/Afghani (1839-97) was an extraordinary modernist cleric who sought to ally religious and secular intellectuals against the Shah's despotism and British imperialism. According to Nikki Keddie, "after activities in Afghanistan and Istanbul and an influential stay in Egypt from 1871 to 1879, he continued his modernist and anti-imperialist writing, first in India and then in Paris, where he edited the anti-British and

---

[188] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, pp. 51-52.

pan-Islamic Arabic newspaper, *al-Urwato al-Wuthga*."[189] Ayatollah Mohammad Hossein Naini, Seyyed Jam al-Din Esfahani, Malek al-Motakalamin, Ayatollah Tabatabi and Ayatollah Behbahani all rejected the state's arbitrary absolutism and supported constitutionalism. In contrast, Ayatollah Sheikh Fazl al-Allah Nuri remained a champion of the counter-revolutionary movement, arguing that Constitutionalism (*Mashrouteh*) is a Western idea and should be replaced by the rule of the *sharia* law (*Mashrou'e*).

Turning from the divided traditional groups, ties with the West contributed to the development of Iran's modern middle and working class. According to Abrahamian, Western ideas, "especially the French Enlightenment, convinced them that history was neither the revelation of God's will, as the *ulama* believed, nor the cyclic rise and fall of dynasties, as the court chroniclers endlessly described, but rather the continual march of human progress."[190] They saw the problem as "three chains of royal despotism, clerical dogmatism, and foreign imperialism." The solution resided in "constitutionalism, secularism, and nationalism."[191] Almost all the intellectuals supported constitutionalism and secularism, and yet they interpreted modern values and institutions in light of their different personal and intellectual careers. Hassan Taghizadeh was a champion of the eighteen-century European Enlightenment, inviting the Iranians to unconditional acceptance of Western culture and institutions. He explicitly called for "the adaptation and promotion, without condition or reservation, of European civilization, absolute submission to Europe, and the assimilation of the culture, customs, practices, organization, sciences, arts, life, and the whole attitude of Europe, without any exception

---

[189] Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 60.
[190] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions,* pp. 61-62
[191] Ibid, pp. 61-62.

save language."[192] Likewise, Mirza Malkom Khan, as the historian Fereydon Adamiyat suggests, called for the "assimilation to the Western Civilization with no Iranian contribution."[193] Akhundzadeh, Talibuf Tabrizi, and Mirza Agha-khan Kermani subscribed to more radical views. The two former intellectuals had lived in Caucasus region of Russia, and were influenced by social democracy and secularism. The latter was the first Iranian social democrat. Iran's first Social Democratic Party was formed by some Iranian intellectuals in 1905, who were strongly influenced by socialist leaders in Russia. The party platform advocated the creation of trade unions to acknowledge workers' rights to unionize, strike, and an eight-hour working day.[194] Iranian social democrats, intellectuals and labours working in the Russian Caucasus were inspired by the 1917 Russian Revolution; some of them participated in the revolution and others such as Sultanzadeh (A. Mikailian) participated in the Comintern.[195]

Unlike many of these nationalist and radical approaches, the dominant outlook among modern intellectuals was to be sceptical about Iranian culture and tradition, and many proposed assimilation to Western culture. Blind passion for the (unknown) West on the part of many Iranian intellectuals contributed to the rise of the counter-revolutionary trend, a reactionary and blind passion for the *sharia* law (*Mashrou'eh*) as advocated by Ayatollah Nuri. The constitutionalist discourse represented by the intellectuals hardly penetrated to the deeper layers of the Iranian society.

---

[192] *Kaveh*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 22, 1920),pp. 1-2, quoted in Edward G. Brown, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978),pp. 486.

[193] Fereydon Adamiyat, *Andisheye Azadi dar Jonbeshe Mashrouteh [The Idea of Freedom in the Constitutional Movement]* (Tehran: Sokhan, 1340/1961), pp. 114

[194] H. Moghissi and S. Rahnema, "The Working Class and the Islamic State in Iran," in Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 281. The authors ref ere to "the Iranian Letter sent by Chalangarian to Kautsky in 1908, and the latter's response."

[195] See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*.

The state under the Qajar dynasty was a sultanistic one: arbitrary and lawless. Unlike the European state under feudalism, Iran's sultanism in general held extensive and unconditional authority over all social forces and classes. No single class was immune from the Shah's personal, arbitrary decisions. As a result, the 1905 Constitutional Revolution sought to abolish the state's arbitrary rule and establish the 'rule of law'. The nature of the revolution was closely related to the nature of the state: "The nature of any revolution," Katouzian argues, "may be discerned by a study of its *aims*, its *supporters*, and its *opponents*."[196] The 'rule of law' and a public demand for "'*mashrooteh*', that is government 'conditioned' by law", was the primary demand of all social groups participating in the Constitutional or "*Mashrooteh*" Revolution. Support for the revolution included almost all merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans, most of the *ulama* and religious community, a majority of landlords and nomadic chieftains, most of the ordinary urban public, and the entire intelligentsia.[197] It is important to note that constitutionalism at the time never meant a democratic state with competitive political parties and representative institutions. As John Markoff argues, first-wave Western democracy did not refer to "freedom of choice we take for granted today."[198] The meaning of democracy developed in the course of the struggle for democracy, and the history of democratization is also the history of struggle over the meaning of democracy. This is true in the case of Iran's century of reform and revolution to achieve democracy.

The 1905 Constitutional Revolution was both a nationalist and democratic movement; its failure, Arjomand argues, was due to three main factors: "the difficulty of

---

[196] Homa Katouzian, *Iranian History and Politics: The Dialectic of state and society* (London; New York: Rutledge Curzon: 2003) p. 27.
[197] Ibid
[198] John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy*, p.3.

forming a strong government under an unsympathetic monarch; the opposition of imperialist powers, especially Russia; and the vested interests of the grandees of the old regime who had accepted the constitutional government."[199] In sum, a combination of the state's sultanism, Russian and British imperialism, the ill-effects of clericalism, tribalism, and landlordism together contributed to the failure of Iran's first wave of democratic change.

### 2.4. The first reverse wave (1911-1951)

With the advent of the First World War, Iran's strategic location undermined its intention to remain in a neutral position, and it quickly became a war zone. The Anglo-Russian occupation in 1911 put an end to Iran's first wave. "Far from strengthening the state," as Ansari put it, "the Constitutional Revolution appeared to have weakened it to the extent it had become a mere plaything for foreign powers."[200] The humiliation of foreign occupation was coupled with the 1919 Anglo-Iranian Agreement, an extremely embarrassing agreement through which the Iranian state compromised Iran's entire national sovereignty. The public and rival foreign powers both reacted against the Agreement. This forced the prime minister to resign and the new government to suspend the Agreement in 1920. The political climate, however, remained chaotic.

The new order came with a new man. On 21 February 1921, Reza Khan, the commander of the Cossack Brigade launched a gradual and bloodless coup. Ahmad Shah Qajar first appointed him as Commander of the Army and then Minister of War in May 1921. Reza Khan successfully suppressed all revolts and movements against the central government, and sought to establish a strong centralized government. In 1923, Reza

---

[199] Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 42.
[200] Ali M. Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and After* (London: Longman: 2003) P. 22.

Khan became Prime Minster and pushed for further reforms. As a result, for the national-constitutionalists, he mistakenly appeared to be "the vehicle through which their agenda would be implemented."[201] Reza Khan's agenda, however, remained far from constitutionalism; he redefined nationalism around his person into a new patrimonialism. "This was the start of 'dynastic nationalism' which would propel Reza Khan towards the throne and provide the ideological umbrella under which other varieties of nationalism would hopefully coalesce."[202] Dynastic nationalism under the Pahlavi monarchy was based on personal rule, while national constitutionalism was based on the rule of law. In 1925 Reze Kahn overthrew the Qajar Shah, and became the founding father of a new Pahlavi dynasty. Now "Reza Shah became king on the twin pillars of tradition and nationalism while at the same time purporting to be a force for modernization."[203] Yet the political system inaugurated by Reza Shah was patrimonial, entirely based on the personal authority of a self-declared monarch. Parliament and the constitution remained, but power became gradually centralized around the personal figure and absolute rule of Reza Shah.

The Constitutional Revolution, as discussed earlier, was followed by civil war, the restoration of autocracy, and the Russian occupation of northern Iran. For this reason, this Revolution had failed to establish a strong and stable centralized state. Abrahamian contends that Reza Shah served this goal of the Constitutional Revolution only to the extent that he succeeded in establishing a new order based on "the pacification of the tribes, the secularization of the society, and the centralization of the state."[204] Yet, the

---

[201] Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921,* p. 33.
[202] Ibid
[203] Ibid, p. 39
[204] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions,* p.153.

regime's stability and order were not based on constitutional popular consent; rather, they were built on "three pillars" of "the new army, the government bureaucracy, and the court patronage."[205] Reza Shah replaced constitutionalism with a modern autocracy. In 1930 he destroyed leftist trade unions, uprooted the ten year old Communist Party of Iran, and imprisoned the famous "Group of Fifty-three" led by Iranian Marxist Taghi Arani.[206] In other words, Reza Shah's politics was against the spirit of constitutionalism and of the 1905 Revolution: the regime trampled over the constitution, favoured the military over the civilian administration, accumulated an illegal private fortune, murdered progressive intellectuals, and widened the gap between the haves and the have-notes.[207]

While they initially supported Reza Shah, by 1941 both traditional and modern classes were sufficiently beaten by the state's violence to begin supporting the fall of Reza Shah, a modernizing and unpopular dictator. His fall was precipitated by the Anglo-Soviet (Allies in the Second World War) invasion of Iran in August 1941. Geopolitics once again determined Iran's political arrangement. While Reza Shah was sent to exile, his departure "unleashed the pent-up social grievances of the previous sixteen years."[208] Reza Shah, in sum, was "a curious amalgam of 'modernizer' and traditional patrimonial

---

[205] Ibid, p.136
[206] The Social Democratic Party established in 1905 was the first leftist Iranian political party but the most important one, Saeed Rahnema observes, "was the social democratic Edalat Party, which in 1920 changed its name to the Communist Party of Iran (*Feq-e Kommonist*) and followed an ultra-Left line calling for immediate socialist revolution." In addition to that, there was "a moderate Left organization, the Revolutionary Republican Party of Iran (*Ferq-e Jomhuri-e Enghelabi-e Iran*)", which was "condemn by the Comintern." See Saeed Rahnema, "The Left and the Struggle for Democracy in Iran," in Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 252.
[207] Ahmad Kasravi, "Concerning Reza Shah Pahlavi," *Parcham*, 23-25 June 1942, quoted in Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions,* p.154.
[208] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Revolutions*, p. 169.

monarch. Reza Shah's legacy was therefore both complex and dynamic."[209] Modernization generated public awareness and also led to political repression.

Reza Shah was overthrown by the British in 1941, and his son Mohammad-Reza Shah, the second and final Pahlavi monarch took power. During the first period of his rule until 1953, Iran initially experienced a limited degree of pluralism. On the societal level, liberal nationalists and the leftists re-emerged and formed their political parties. The Party of Iran (*Hezb-e Iran*), among other nationalist parties and individuals, established the National Front (*Jebhe-ye Melli*). In 1941, the *Tudeh* (Masses) Party of Iran formed the most organized and influential leftist political party of the country. The Tudeh Party established close ties to the Soviet Union; its relative success, however, "was due more to its conscious revival of the social democratic tradition" on the national level. The party appealed to the modern urban middle and working class, and demanded "the redistribution of Crown lands, labour law reforms, and equal pay and voting rights for women."[210]

On the state level, despite the fragility of the state and instability of cabinets, the diffusion of the power structure in the post-Reza Shah period hindered the rise of royal despotism and helped Iran's national integrity. "From the fall of Reza Shah's military monarchy in August 1941 until the rise of Muhammad-Reza Shah's military monarchy in August 1953," Abrahamian argues, "power was to shift back and forth between five separate poles: the court, the *Majles*, the cabinet, the foreign embassies, and the general

---

[209] Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921*, p. 75.
[210] Afshin Matin-Asgari, "From Social Democracy to Social Democracy: The twentieth-century odyssey of the Iranian Left" in Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 41-42.

public."[211] At this point, as Azimi argues, "conditions were far more congenial to the emergence of a viable parliamentarism than had been the case in the pre-Reza Shah era." Unlike the 1905 Constitutional Revolution era, Iran in the post-Reza Shah period enjoyed a centralized state with a relatively modern administration and means of communication.[212] At this time, cabinet instability and rapid change was the most significant problem facing Iran's parliamentary politics. "During the twelve-year course of this period, twelve prime ministers formed seventeen Cabinets which underwent twenty-three major reshuffles."[213] The relatively diffused structure of authority among contesting political groups and the weakness of the monarch contributed to Iran's second wave of democratization.

## 3. Iran's Second Wave (1951-53)

Iran's second wave of democratization emerged under the leadership of liberal-nationalist Mohammad Mosaddeq, the unexpected and short-lived prime minister under Mohammad-Reza Shah. The lack of resistance against the 1941 Allied invasion showed that Pahlavi's dynastic nationalism lacked sufficient cultural bonds by which Iran could have defended itself. In Ansari's view, the invasion ironically "liberated Iranian nationalism" from the grip of dynastic nationalism.[214] A decade later, however, a genuine Iranian nationalism emerged under the leadership of Mohammad Mosaddeq. The rise of democratic nationalism revolved around the 1951-53 Oil Nationalization Movement.

---

[211] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Revolutions*, p. 170.
[212] Fakhreddin Azimi, *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1989), Pp. 339-340
[213] Ibid, P. 340
[214] Ansari, *Modern Iran since* 1921, pp. 76-77.

In early 1949, Iranian nationalists voiced their opposition to the 1933 oil agreement between Iran and the Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). Iran was receiving only 22 cents per barrel, far less than the tax Britain received from AIOC. Iranian nationalists demanded a fifty-fifty profit sharing similar to those of Venezuela-US and Saudi Arabia-US agreements. AIOC rejected the demand and offered 33 cents per barrel. This was unacceptable to most people, and public protests and a general strike by the oil workers encouraged the *Majles* to propose the oil nationalization bill. Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq, a man who captured a moment in Iranian history and became the leader of the movement, agreed to accept the office if the *Majles* would pass the oil nationalization bill. Mosaddeq was a liberal aristocrat and a devoted democrat. In his view, a half-a-century of oil concession held by the Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) was a legacy of British colonialism.[215] The AIOC, he believed, had caused the moral decay not only of Iran as a nation but of Iranian politics and politicians. As such, the nationalization of the oil industry was meant to be a necessary path toward freedom and full independence.

### 3.1: The Second Wave: Neither Revolution nor Reform; a "Refolution"?

Mohammad Mosaddeq's reform agendas were intentionally less controversial in form but deeply revolutionary in character. He came to power with two agendas in hand: first, to implement the oil nationalization law approved by the *Majles*, which would enable the state to resume its full political independence and use all national incomes to improve the living conditions of the people. Secondly, he sought to establish a meaningful parliamentary democracy by reforming both the parliamentary and municipal

---

[215] In 1901 a British citizen, William Knox D'Arcy was granted a concession for oil in Iran except northern Iran controlled by the Russian. In 1908 oil was discovered in southwest Iran and the following year (1909) the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was established. In 1914 the British government bought a majority share of the company.

electoral laws. The reform outcomes were revolutionary in promoting a regime change; and yet, these outcomes, to follow Charles Tilly's argument, were achieved under non-revolutionary conditions.[216] Iran's second wave, to use Timothy Garton Ash's phrase, was a "refolution"[217]: a movement holding revolutionary and reform elements together, while aiming for Iran's freedom and full independence. In the words of Mohammad Mosaddeq, "after fifty years of contemplation and experience, I have come to the conclusion that it is only the attainment of freedom and full independence which will enable the Iranian nation to overcome numerous obstacles in the path of its prosperity and greatness."[218]

### 3.1.1. "Refolution" in Mosaddeq's domestic policy

*i. Nationalism in the Service of Democratic Constitutionalism:*

Mosaddeq's nationalism was neither "communal prejudices at home in the name of achieving independence," nor an "instrument of oppression."[219] In his view independence and democracy went hand in hand: establishment of a parliamentary democracy required dismantling the royal autocracy and the termination of the British influence in Iran. Mosaddeq believed that royal autocracy not only hindered political development and parliamentary democracy, but facilitated foreign domination. In his theory, sultanism and imperialism were two faces of the same coin; they reinforced each other. Mosaddeq fought sultanism as he confronted imperialism to establish parliamentary democracy in Iran. Mosaddeq had realized that monarchy in its existing

---

[216] Charles Tilly, European Revolution: 1492-1992. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993

[217] Timothy Garton Ash, "Refolution," in Timothy Garton Ash ed., *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the fate of Central Europe* (Vintage, 1990), pp. 309-24 and Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolutions of 89: Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague* (New York: Random House, 1990)

[218] Jalil Buzurgmehr, ed., *Mosaddeq dar Mahkameye Nezami*, Vol.1 &2 (Tehran: 1985) quoted in Azimi....

[219] Azimi, *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy*, p. 334.

form could not be successfully reconciled with the workings of parliamentary government. His solution was a peaceful transition to parliamentary democracy. Despite his reformist language, he believed that freedom and independence required a government independent of the Royal Court. "In a constitutional country," Mosaddeq argued, "in order to safeguard the crown from criticism, the King is not responsible. It is for this reason that I maintain the King must reign and not rule."[220] Mosaddeq's goal was to institutionalize the ceremonial nature of royal authority. In doing so, he challenged the Court in a number of ways: he held Cabinet sessions in his own house, not in the presence of the Shah; the Shah was prohibited from direct contact with foreign diplomats; and Princess Ashraf, the Shah's twin sister actively involved against the movement, was sent into exile. Mosaddeq also claimed that the army was not the Shah's personal militia, but the country's shield and, therefore, it should be administrated on behalf of the people. In July 1952 he asked the Shah to stop appointing the head of armed forces. When the Shah resisted, Mosaddeq resigned on July 16. Public pressure forced the Shah to acknowledge Mosaddeq's constitutional right to appoint the Minister of War, and on July 21 Mosaddeq returned to office with enhanced prestige. "No politician in the constitutional era of Iranian history," writes Azimi, "succeeded to such a degree in marginalizing the Shah and containing the Court."[221]

*ii. Commitment to the Spirit of Constitutionalism:*

Mosaddeq believed in democratic values and the "spirit of constitutionalism." When the royal Court manipulated constitutional procedures and used the *Majles* to launch a legislative blockade, Mosaddeq did not get trapped in the constitutional rules

---

[220] Farhad Diba, *Mossadeqh: A Political Biography* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 171.
[221] Azimi, "The Reconciliation of Politics and Ethics, Nationalism and Democracy", p. 61

violating basic rules of parliamentary democracy.[222] He instead appealed directly to the people. In his words: "Laws, parliaments and governments are made for the people, not the people for them. When the people do not want any of them, they may express their opinion about it. In democratic and constitutional countries, there is no law higher than the people's will." Similarly, resorting to a referendum, Mosaddeq announced that "in democratic countries no law is above the will of the people."[223] In October 1951 Mosaddeq went to the *Majles* to address the question of the dismissal of British personnel from Abadan. Opposing Mosaddeq's plan, a group of deputies abstained from attendance. Mosaddeq proceeded to the front gates of the *Majles* and delivered his speech to the surrounding people. "His opening words," according to Diba, "went to the core of his political philosophy: 'Wherever the people are, the *Majles* is at the same place'."[224] Mosaddeq, Abrahamian argues, "had come to power by the streets; he continued to remain in office by the same manner."[225] He believed in the will of the people as the sole source for changing the law, but he also believed in populism as an effective political strategy in challenging the royal Court. Given his legal training and commitment to constitutional reforms, Mosaddeq was aware of the royal Court's political games of manipulating constitutional politics. He understood that any blind commitment to constitutional or legal politics could lead to the consolidation of the Shah's autocracy. Hence, Mosaddeq used populism to overcome the shortcomings of existing constitutional politics. In fighting the elitist and aristocratic approach in politics, Mosaddeq appealed to the people, whose will gives legitimacy to political power. "People," said Mosaddeq,

---

[222] Ibid, p. 59
[223] Diba, *Mossadeqh: A Political Biography*, p.174.
[224] Ibid, p.130
[225] Ervand Abrahamian, "The Crowed in Iranian Politics, 1905-53," in Haleh Afshar, ed., *Iran: A Revolution in Turmoil* (Hound mills: Macmillan, 1985), 127.

"were perfectly capable of recognizing and, in congenial circumstances, rewarding their genuine servants."[226] The people in return showed their full confidence in Mosaddeq when he asked them to buy government bonds, and they responded by purchasing bonds in the amount of one billion Rials offered for a period of fifteen days, a significant amount of money at that time.[227]

His 'politics of the street,' populism and mobilization of the people challenged the dominant political culture of clientalism and patrimonialism. The royal Court was deeply disappointed with Mosaddeq's populist strategy: Fateh, the royalist Speaker of the *Majles* cried in frustration:

> Is this man a Prime Minister or a mob leader? What type of a statesman says, 'I will speak to the people' every time there is a political issue to be solved? I have always considered this man to be unreliable, but in my wildest nightmares, I never imagined that an old man of seventy could be a demagogue, a rabble-rouser who would not hesitate to surround the parliament buildings with thugs.[228]

Mosaddeq's populism was an instrument for gaining people's freedom and the nation's independence; he never used his appeal as an instrument of oppression against personal opponents. He never appreciated flattery, and issued an order to the police specifically allowing any opposing views to be said or written about him without interfering with the personal freedoms of the people. He banned "the ceremonial titles," made no use of office for personal ends, carried out his duties from his own home, refused to receive a salary and even personally met many official expenses.[229] He issued an angry statement when he heard that a group of people had collected money for a statue

---

[226] Azimi, "The Reconciliation of Politics and Ethics, Nationalism and Democracy", p. 63
[227] Diba, *Mossadeqh: A Political Biography*, p.139
[228] M. Fateh, *Fifty Years of Iranian Oil* (in Farsi) (Tehran: Sherkat-I Sahami-I Chap, 1956, p. 58, quoted in Abrahamian, "The Crowd in Iranian Politics," p. 127.
[229] Azimi, "The Reconciliation of Politics and Ethics, Nationalism and Democracy", p.63

of him to be placed in a public square: he accused them of idolatry. Mosaddeq brought to an end a long-living tradition of sycophancy in Iran's formal political culture.[230]

Mosaddeq's genuine attempt to combine politics with ethics distinguished him from other statesmen of his time. What perhaps above all distinguishes Mosaddeq's politics of morality from a traditional version of moral politics was his adherence to ethical values and civic standards in the Iranian political culture without being a moralizer. According to Azimi, Mosaddeq's "main vision was to establish a polity which would be impervious to corruption and would, therefore, enhance the credibility of the government and ultimately give substance and meaning to citizenship and political participation."[231]

*iii. Slow but structural reforms:*

The "nine-point program" under Mosaddeq leadership was a comprehensive plan including the amendment of electoral laws, legal system, press laws, land reform, employment law, army, and tax policy. The plan also included improvement of education, heath, communication, local government and village councils. Mosaddeq's "agrarian reform" was aimed at reducing foreign dependence and resolving socio-economic problems of disparities in income and employment. His land reform law provided the country's more than 40,000 villages with partly-elected councils, local income, and their own bank account. He forced the Shah to return the Court lands to the state for distribution to the peasants. As part of "educational reform" he made Tehran University financially independent, and implemented free and compulsory education throughout the country. By making the Iranian legal system autonomous, Mosaddeq laid

---

[230] Diba, *Mossadeqh: A Political Biography*, p.116
[231] Azimi, *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953*, p. 334.

the foundation for an independent judiciary and served the rights of legal defence. He revived the army as a defence force and renamed the Ministry of War as the Ministry of National Defence. Since the Shah's real aim of controlling the army was to consolidate his own power, Mosaddeq brought reduction to government spending on the army. He also purged 130 army officers, including 15 generals opposing the democratic movement. He was the first Iranian prime minister to order that the debates of the *Majles* be broadcast, years before it took place in some Western democracies. He supported an open press: of a total of 273 publications, some 70 in Tehran were against Mosaddeq's government in 1953.[232]

Finally, Mosaddeq's proposal for an oil-less economy (*Eghtesad-e bedon-e Naft*) was intended to introduce structural reform of Iranian society. When faced with a British embargo on the purchase of Iranian oil, Mosaddeq took advantage of the situation and proposed to the *Majles* in March 1953 that the economy should become independent of oil income, and the oil revenues be utilized in developing socially beneficial projects instead of buying arms. Mosaddeq hoped his vision of independence would consolidate Iran's economy and national sovereignty.

Oil revenue was reduced from $400 million in 1950 to almost $2 million between July 1951 and August 1953. The state's first developmental plan failed due to financial problems: The economic crisis and inability to pay salaries elevated social tensions. But it also encouraged the national economy, as small industries benefited from the expansion of domestic production and reduction of dependence on imports. Through this economic restructuring, Mosaddeq succeeded in increasing Iran's export products by 13 percent and reduced imports by 50 per cent. It was a positive step towards economic

---

[232] Diba, *Mossadeqh: A Political Biography*, pp.158-168.

reform. Mosaddeq succeeded in achieving a relatively desirable balance of trade with an oil-less economy, a feat never to be repeated in the post-Mosaddeq period.

Had Mosaddeq's economic reforms been achieved it would have had significant political implications as it could have liberated Iran from the status of a rentier state and allowed even greater political development. A *rentier* state is one in which a substantial portion of the state's revenue is derived from rents on resources consumed by the outside world.[233] "Rentier states," Hossein Mahdavy argues, "receive on a regular basis substantial amounts of external rents. External rents are in turn defined as rental paid by foreign individuals, concerns or governments to a given country." In rentier states "the inputs from the local economies – other than the raw materials – are insignificant." The oil exporting countries in the Middle East are examples of rentier states, because "the oil revenues received by the governments of the oil exporting countries have very little to do with the production processes of their economies.[234]

The extremely high oil-income of rentier states makes them domestically unaccountable. Thus, rentier states tend towards authoritarian politics. They have "the capacity to take initiatives and formulate policies that are not necessarily reflective of the aspiration and interests of any group within civil society."[235] Mosaddeq's ideas for an oil-less economy was a significant effort to oppose the politics of rentierism in Iran, and initiate a process towards greater democracy and political independence.

---

[233] Beblawi Luciani, Hazen and Giacomo Luciani, eds., *The Rentier State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987)

[234] Hossein Mahdavy, "The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in rentier States: The Case of Iran," *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, M.A. Cook (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 428-29.

[235] Sussan Siavoshi, *Liberal Nationalism in Iran: The Failure of a Movement* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p.11.

### 3.1.2. "Refolution" in Mosaddeq's foreign policy

*i. Nationalism in the service of national dignity and true independence:*

Turning from Mosaddeq's domestic activities towards his views on foreign policy and international relations, the oil issue in his view became an instrument of the post-colonial nationalist movement in Iran. In the words of Hussein Fatemi, the architect of the nationalization of the oil industry and Mosaddeq's foreign minister, the oil issue was "as significant for Iran as was independence for Indonesia, India, Syria, and Lebanon."[236] According to Homa Katouzian, "Mosaddeq and his colleagues were explicit that the most important reason for the oil nationalization was political rather than economic."[237] Mosaddeq was "prepared to settle the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute at almost any economic price, but was equally determined not to grant another concession at any cost."[238] For him, any talk of democracy, freedom and the rule of law was no more than indulgence in romantic self-deception unless foreign concessionaires were removed at all economic costs. This is why the principle of nationalizing the oil industry was not a matter of debate: Mosaddeq said, "anyone who aims to disparage the holy struggle of our nation by assessing the achievements of the Iranian movement in economic terms and by comparing the independence of our country with a few million pounds, has certainly perpetrated a blunder."[239]

In Mosaddeq's view colonialism and imperialism result not only in political and economic dependence, but spiritual and cultural decay. But Mosaddeq admired Western democratic values and traditions and rejected anti-Westernism. He never harboured

---

[236] *Bakhtare Emrouz*, 1950.

[237] Homa Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1990), p.137.

[238] Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran*, p.138

[239] *Mozakerate Majlis*, 1952, quoted in Azimi, *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953*, p. 334.

popular anti-British emotions; he consistently maintained that Iran was not in dispute with the British people or the government, but only with the AIOC. Mosaddeq attempted to gain US support over the oil nationalizing movement, but President Eisenhower refused to purchase Iranian oil, and refused to provide Iran with any loans or economic-technical assistance. Yet, Mosaddeq declared "'we are very grateful to the American people for their very valuable moral support...but we expected the American government to pay more consideration to the rightful demands of the Iranian people, being cognizant of the fact the American people have acquired their liberty and independence through their continued national struggle.'"[240]

*ii. Negative equilibrium: a radical paradigm shift in the Iranian foreign policy:*

In Mosaddeq's view Iran's transition to a parliamentary democracy was closely related to the policy of "negative equilibrium," in which Iran was to equally exclude all colonial powers from shaping its national politics. Like the British, the Russians were also deprived of colonial intervention in Iran. The Russians had received from Reza Shah the caviar concession and the fishing rights in the Caspian Sea, which expired in October 1927. Mosaddeq provides a gripping story of this episode in which, despite Russian efforts, he refused to renew the concession:

> Sadchikoff, the Russian ambassador, came to my house on two occasions to discuss the Caspian fisheries, whose concession was ending in Bahman 1331[February 1952]. He requested that the fisheries be left in the hands of the Russians, as heretofore, until a new concession was drawn up. I said that a government which had nationalized the oil company before the end of concession and expelled the British oil workers from Iran, how can it now leave an expired concession in the hands of the Russians? The Russian ambassador replied: you are correct; we should not have made such a demand of you. He apologized and left.[241]

---

[240] FO 248 1531, file. 10105/124, dated 24 Marh11952, quoted in Ansari, *Modern Iran since* 1921, p.115.
[241] Diba, *Mossadeqh: A Political Biography*, p.168.

Mosaddeq emerged as an international symbol of post-colonial struggle, and he was aware of his role in challenging the world-wide power of a declining British Empire. He said, "our movement served as an inspiration to the national uprising of other peoples, and today peoples of North and South Africa anxiously await our success."[242] On his return from New York to Tehran in 1951, Mosaddeq stopped over in Egypt and was received as a hero by the Egyptian public, as shown by photographs in the international press of the time. Nahas Pasha welcomed him as "the guiding light of the Middle East." In 1956, President Nasser followed Mosaddeq's approach in the nationalization of the Suez Cannel.

Mosaddeq's idea of "negative equilibrium" contributed later to the making of the Non-alignment Movement. His policy set the stage for the establishment of a third block of neutral countries during the Cold War period, between the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union.

*iii. Critical and yet working 'within' the International legal and political framework:*

The long history of external interference in Iran's history finally came to the UN, when Britain referred the subject of AIOC to the UN Security Council. Mosaddeq proposed documentation of direct interference of the British consulates in Iranian domestic affairs in two portfolios, and represented them at the United Nations in New York and at the International Court in The Hague. Britain was surprised when Mosaddeq attended the United Nation session, arriving in New York on 15 October 1951. Accompanied by a delegation of oil experts, Mosaddeq defended Iran's rights to self determination and national resurgence. He spoke about Iran's nationalizing the oil

---

[242] FO 248 1514, file 10101, file no. 10101/517/51, dated 18 December 1951, quoted in Ansari, *Modern Iran since 192*, p. 115.

industry in a wider context of the anti-colonial movement, referring to the legitimate act

of the American people in the defense of their rights against British colonialists as in the

event of the 1773 Boston Tea Party. Mosaddeq's access to Western, and in particular US,

public opinion encouraged the American public to remember their fight against British

imperialism in 1776. In June 1952 Mosaddeq went to The Hague, presented 181

documents against British interference in Iran, and challenged the jurisdiction of the

International Court on the dispute between Iran and Britain. In his speech to the

International Court he argued that

> [T]here is no political or moral yardstick by which the Court can measure its
> judgement in the case of nationalization of the oil industry in Iran. In spite of my
> physical weakness, I have come to The Court in order to talk about these very
> same political and moral problems within the oil industry, and to point out that
> under no condition will we accept the jurisdictions of the Court on this subject.
> We cannot put ourselves in the dangerous situation which might arise out of the
> Court's decision.[243]

Mosaddeq was eager to work within the international framework, despite his

skepticism of British intentions or readiness to come to an agreement with him. He was

keenly aware of global *realpolitik*, welcomed American efforts, and was ready to accept a

reasonable solution. In October-November 1951 he agreed to a diplomatic solution

provided by George McGhee, the US Assistant Secretary of State, but it was rejected by

Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary.[244] While Britain engaged in seizures in

southern Iran, imposed financial blockades, and threatened military intervention,

Mosaddeq countered with legal arguments and diplomatic approaches.

---

[243] *Modafeate Mosaddeq va Rollin dar Divane Binolmelaliye Lahe* (Tehran, 1357-1978).
[244] George McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World: Adventures in Diplomacy (New York: 1983)

### 3.1.3. The Second Wave: Lessons and Legacy

Despite its short-lived experience, the second wave of democratization and its final fate left lessons for Iranians, still relevant for today's political challenges. The politics and personality of Mohammad Mosaddeq deeply influenced Iranian politics. Mosaddeq's "revolutionary reform" showed what was needed for a transition to democracy: restraining the symbolic power of the non-elected autocratic elites; consolidating the powers of the elected democratic executive; reforming the electoral laws and procedures; appealing to the public and encouraging their participation; relying not merely on the word but on the spirit of constitutionalism; elevating moral politics without moralizing; fighting patrimonial and corrupt clientalist culture; showing that foreign powers could better pursue their interests if the national polity remained non-democratic; being anti-imperialist without inflaming anti-Westernism; working within the international system without sacrificing national sovereignty or national dignity; attempting to implement gradual, yet fundamental social changes; and elaborating the theory of the oil-less economy. While not providing a conclusive or all-encompassing metatheory for democratization, this list consists of features which are essential components of the larger process of democratization in the Iranian context. Iran's second wave of democratization was unfortunately short-lived. For a number of reasons Mosaddeq failed in creating a parliamentary democracy and achieving true independence: a complex set of international structural constraints, the dynamics of domestic politics, combined with the personality and populism of Mosaddeq.

First, the international dominant structure of *realpolitik* worked against the movement, yet Mosaddeq pushed for victory despite contrary evidence. To borrow

Hossein Fatemi's phrase, he "was committed to combating 'spiritual defeatism'; he was motivated by hope and national responsibility; he, to paraphrase Antonio Gramsci, challenged "the pessimism of the intellect in favour of the optimism of the will."[245] Mosaddeq was aware that nationalizing the oil industries would require a considerable degree of British co-operation. He retained the workers and technicians under the newly formed National Iranian Oil Company. But he was unwilling to compromise on the principle of nationalization. Britain too was unwilling to compromise on such a unilateral and illegal act of nationalization, as it would signal the retreat of the Empire and provoke similar acts in the region. The Americans, too, were reluctant to side with Mosaddeq and remained sympathetic with their British allies. The nature of the Communist threat within the logic of Cold War politics was exploited by Iran and Britain in order to secure American support. At the time, the United States with the Republican administration of President Eisenhower in the White House, was affected by anti-Communist sentiments throughout the country. Mosaddeq referred to the activities of Iran's Communist Tudeh Party, warning the US that a military coup backed by the West against his government would lead to a Communist backlash exploited by the Soviet Union. Britain sought to convince the Americans the West would lose Iran under Mosaddeq, and was successful in gaining American support. As a result, the United States, perceived by Iranians to be "the only serious avenue of release from the twin manacles of British and Russian imperialism," turned out to be the most serious threat to the democratic movement in Iran. According to Ansari, "now it was gradually dawning on Iran's politicians that American idealism all too easily fell victims to American national interests."[246] The

---

[245] Azimi, *The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953,* p.338.
[246] Ansari, *Modern Iran since* 192, p.116.

United States eventually planned and implemented the August 19, 1953 military coup, putting an end to the second wave of democratic experience in modern Iran.

Second, the coup toppling Mosaddeq's government succeeded primarily due to domestic conditions. If Mosaddeq's government had enjoyed a substantial social base, foreign intervention would have failed. For many reasons, Mosaddeq's politics and personality were disappointing to many social and political groups, which as a result were deeply divided. The National Front was a coalition of nationalist, liberal, and conservative political parties and individual activists. By 1953 the Toilers' Party of Mozaffar Baghaie, the Third Force of Khalil Maleki, and Kashani's conservative supporters withdrew from the National Front. The Tudeh Party was a well organized radical party with almost 25 thousand members (23% intellectuals and 75% workers and 2% peasants) – it was the nation's most powerful political party in 1953.[247] The Tudeh Party never was in the coalition and sought radical change, and viewed liberals such as Mosaddeq as pro-American and soft on religious groups. "With its capitulation to Stalinism and the dictates of the Soviet state,"[248] the Tudeh Party discredited itself when it fully supported the Soviet demand for an oil concession in the north to match the British oil concession in the south. The position of the Tudeh Party over the issue of *naft-e shomal* (the oil of the north) disappointed the "independent Left," who later played a more constructive role in supporting the movement. But the independent Left was deeply marginalized, as it was attacked by both the Stalinist Left and the conservative Right. For religious fundamentalists belonging to *Fadaeian-e Islam*, followers of Ayatollah Kashani, and those allied with the Royal Court including some liberals, Mosaddeq was

---

[247] Hosein Bashiriyeh, *The State and Revolution in Iran, 1962-1982*. Croom Helm, 1983), p. 15.
[248] Afshin Matin-Asgari, "From Social Democracy to Social Democracy," p. 42.

"exposed to the charge of being a Trojan Horse for an inevitable communist take-over."[249] To the rival members of the National Front, the secular Khalil Makki – "the first and most effective critic of Stalinism and Soviet Communism, and founder of a parliamentary socialist movement in Iran"[250] – and the religious leader Ayatollah Kashani, Mosaddeq appeared as a dictator, because he had decided to use short-term emergency power or martial law when necessary to protect the movement. The Army, which was never on Mosaddeq's side, gradually became hostile, given Mosaddeq's austerity drives and purges. On the eve of the coup, the bazaar, both for religious and economic reasons, did not actively support Mosaddeq. Moreover, time was not on Mosaddeq's side, and the public demanded immediate and tangible results and disliked chaos. The traditional institution of monarchy still possessed legitimacy among traditional social groups. Britain was aware of these domestic dynamics, and encouraged the Shah to dismiss his prime minister. The first coup attempted by anti-Mosaddeq forces failed, but a second succeeded a few days later. In addition to money and assurances Britain and the United States provided to Mosaddeq's opponents, the lack of organized public resistance made the coup a success. The lesson of Mosaddeq's downfall was that neither domestic despotism nor foreign imperialism can succeed when the leader and the people come together.

Third, Mosaddeq's populism was at once favourable and unfavourable for the movement. It helped the movement and Mosaddeq himself to cross constitutional

---

[249] Ansari, *Modern Iran since* 192, p.121

[250] Homa Katouzian, "The Strange Politics of Khalil Maleki," in Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 165. In 1947, the internal difference in the Tudeh Party resulted in the separation of some of the party members led by Khalil Maleki who "formed the short-lived Socialist Tudeh Society (Jamiyat-I Socialist-e Tudeh)." He then joined the Toilers' Party of Mozaffar Baghaie and later in his own party, the Third Force (*Niro-ye Sevom*).

constraints and overcome rigid legalism, thereby preventing exploitation of the constitution by the royal Court. While his populism was a backbone for Iran's initial stage of parliamentary democracy, his populism weakened the social base of the movement and replaced an effective and strong party system. The National Front, Mosaddeq's major organizational vehicle, was composed of liberals, socialists, and religious groups or individuals who shared the goal of nationalizing the oil industry. However, they remained rivals in many ways, and thus the National Front was far from being a strong political party instrumental in supporting Mosaddeq in power, and never succeeded in organizing or mobilizing the masses.

The liberal nationalists were unorganized. Mosaddeq understood the role of political parties for parliamentary democracy but failed to organize a party of his own, organizing his followers and institutionalizing his political achievements. Mosaddeq was deeply pessimistic about the possibility of having a successful party system, given the repeated failure to create a stable and functioning political party in the past. In September 1962, however, he himself made the following significant confession: "the backwardness of we Iranians is due to the absence of political and social organizations and it was because of this defeat that our beloved Iran lost its freedom and independence without anyone being able to make the slightest protest."[251]

In sum, like the first wave, the second wave turned out to be a lost opportunity, and came to an end as a result of external intervention. Moreover, like the first wave, the Shah, the Sheikh, and the landlords were the three pillars of the reverse wave.

---

[251] Mokatebate Mosaddeq, 1975, quoted in Azimi, "The Reconciliation of Politics and Ethics, Nationalism and Democracy," p. 62

Mosaddeq's legacy, however, remained powerful and important in Iran's quest for democracy.

## 4. Iran's Third Wave (1977-present)

The 1953 coup brought Iran a second reverse or antidemocratic wave (1953-1977). For a period of twenty-five-years, with the exception of the brief 1960-1963 uprising, the country experienced no popular movement. "The 1953 coup," as Abrahamian put it, "brought down an iron curtain on Iranian politics. It cut the opposition leaders from their followers, the militants from the general public, and the political parties from their social base."[252] The Shah's post-coup politics, Mirsepassi suggests, deliberately "destroyed the already fragile democratic secular political institutions." The Shah's policy of autocratic modernization challenged people's socio-cultural traditions, which ironically strengthened the traditional institutions. The experience of "the social and psychological alienation by Iranian society," the transformation of the Shiite discourse, and the construction of a new Islamic ideology were all unintended consequences of the Shah's modernization.[253] This produced new discourses and more radical ideas, which eventually contributed to a new wave of democratic demands. This new wave consisted of a coalition of the traditional and modern classes, secular and religious groups, leftists and liberals, and revolutionary and reformist groups who, for different reasons, were disappointed with the Shah's autocratic modernization. This mass movement brought down the regime in February 1979; in its place the revolution institutionalized a political regime which combined elements of republicanism and

---

[252] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 450.

[253] Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 2000), pp.65-66.

religious clericalism. By the early 1980s, it became clear that Ayatollah Khomeini and his close clerical circle were determined to exclude other forces that participated in the Revolution, making the post-revolutionary regime an exclusive zone of the Khomeinist forces. As a result, shortly after the revolution Iran experienced another reverse wave. Iran's third democratic wave, however, re-emerged in the late 1990s. The history and politics of Iran's third wave can be divided into four governments under Ayatollah Khomeini and post-Khomeini leadership.

### 4.1: Iran's Third Wave: One Republic and Four Governments

The post-revolutionary Iranian polity can be divided into four Khomeinist governments, each having a different political character, the nature of which, borrowing Daniel Brumberg's phrase, has been "institutionally dissonant."[254] For this reason it is legitimate to argue that the nature of this polity simultaneously combines elements of totalitarian, authoritarian, and democratic politics, while each government predominantly represented one of these politics.[255] The first Khomeinist government (1979-1989) remained under Ayatollah Khomeini's charismatic rule and enjoyed revolutionary, populist-totalitarian features.[256] Like all totalitarian regimes, it aimed at absolute control of the public life. Ayatollah Khomeini's charismatic personality, the revolutionary fever, the boost in global oil price (to $50 per barrel), and the Iraq-Iran war were all instrumental in mobilizing the masses in order to eliminate the opposition and to consolidate a revolutionary, populist-totalitarian polity.

---

[254] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) chapter 5.

[255] See Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," pp. 48-70.

[256] For an interesting analysis of this period, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Berkeley and London: 1993).

The second government (1989-1997) began immediately following the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989, and lasted for almost another decade. Like other post-charismatic politics, as Weber argued, the Iranian polity in the post-Khomeini era experienced the crisis of the "routinization of charisma."[257] Ayatollah Khomeini's successor, Ali Khamenei, neither enjoyed Ayatollah Khomeini's charisma nor his scholastic credentials. Furthermore, the state enjoyed less popular legitimacy, and the political system became less totalitarian but more authoritarian in nature. The absence of charisma undermined the totalitarian character of the clerical polity, pushing the regime towards a limited degree of pluralism, while the crisis of legitimacy made the political system more authoritarian.[258] The relationship between state and society in the second government was far more problematic than in the first government. A combination of the 1988 ceasefire in the eight-year Iran-Iraq war with no clear victory, the decline of the global oil price ($10 or less per barrel), the fall of the revolutionary fever, the rise of a new generation with new demands, and the failure of the state to meet their demands all contributed to the crisis of legitimacy in the second government.

If Ayatollah Khomeini's death and the end of the Iraq-Iran war terminated the first government, the explosive demands for greater pluralism and freedom put an end to the second. The unexpected presidential election of Mohammad Khatami, a moderate reformist cleric, in the 2nd *Khordad* 1376 (May 23, 1997) marked the beginning of the third government (1997- 2005). Iran's May Movement in 1997 remained at once a critical juncture in Iran's third wave and a failed transition to democracy. The electorate cast

[257] For further discussions on the routinization of charisma, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 2, 246-254.
[258] For a successful analysis of 'totalitarianism' and 'authoritarianism', see Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996) chapter 3.

their vote for Khatami's democratic reform twice, in the 1997 and 2001 presidential elections. They also voted overwhelmingly for the reformers in the Municipal elections of 1999 and the parliamentary elections of 2000. Incapable of meeting the public demands and unable to deal with the counter-reform movement, reformists in power began to lose public support in three major elections: the February 2003 second municipal elections, the February 2004 seventh parliamentary elections, and eventually the June 2005 ninth presidential elections. Ironically, the most democratic government, the third government, gave birth to perhaps the most anti-democratic polity, the fourth government, in post-revolutionary Iran.

## 5. Conclusion

The failure of Iran's first wave was due to a number of structural and non-structural factors. Following Max Weber's argument, the very definition of a modern state is attached to its national sovereignty. It is hard to believe that a modern, legal-rational authority can flourish under intense colonial disputes and disorder. Likewise, a nation-state with firm and undisputed boundaries, as Rustow put it, is a fundamental precondition for democracy.[259] Thus, it was a combination of sultanism, tribalism, clericalism, and the absence of a centralized nation-state that ultimately led to the floundering of Iran's first wave.

Like the first wave, the second wave was derived from the support of four social groups: The traditional merchant class of the bazaar, the clerics (*ulama*), the working class, and the emergent middle class which consisted of intellectuals such as Mosaddeq committed to parliamentary politics and liberal democracy. As Richard Cottam argues,

---

[259] See Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," in *Transitions to Democracy*, ed., Lisa Anderson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

"it was not, however, the liberalism of the liberal nationalists that gave them their potential; it was the nationalism. The set of abstract values that constitutes liberalism can attract the intense support of only a small percentage of any population; but the potential appeal of nationalism is to the overwhelming majority of the population."[260] The nationalists were successful as long as they remained connected to the people. When Mosaddeq lost his access to the media and the *Majles*, his influence over the public declined. It is estimated that by 1951 the number of people mobilized, "judging from newspaper circulation, education levels and voting, was probably in the range of 10 per cent," while in the pre-1951 period it was "no more than 1-2 per cent of the population."[261] Hence, the social base of the second wave was relatively large but remained unorganized and ineffective.

The most significant lesson and legacy of the second wave concerns Mosaddeq's constitutionalism. His constitutionalism remained "refolutionary" because he did not respect all the existing constitutional procedures once they went against democratic arrangements. A successful path in Iran's third wave will likely combine elements of reform and revolution. However, this might be taken only by leaders who combine commitment to non-violence with commitment to freedom and democracy.

Iran's third wave remains complex, and consisted of one major revolution and one significant reform movement: the 1979 Revolution and the 1997 May Movement. The politics, perspectives, and personality of Ayatollah Khomeini are central to the history and politics of the third wave. In the following chapters, I will discuss the making of

---

[260] Richard Cotton, "Nationalism in twentieth-century Iran and Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq," in James A. Bill and WM. Roger Louis (eds.) *Musaddeq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1988), p. 25.
[261] Ibid, p. 26

*Khomeinism* and then examine each of the four governments as Iran's third wave of democratization has waxed and waned.

# CHAPTER THREE

## The 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Making of *Khomeinism*

## 1. Introduction

Iran's third wave of democratization began with the 1979 Revolution and coincided with the global "third wave" of democratization. Like all revolutions, the 1979 Iranian Revolution brought about a regime transition, yet proved to be a failed transition to democracy. Soon after the revolution *Khomeinism*, one voice of the opposition under the Pahlavi regime, came to dominate the political scene, monopolize all political resources, and gradually eliminate all oppositional voices. A new non-democratic regime replaced the Shah's neo-sultanistic regime. Why and how did Iran's third wave of democratization fail? To answer this question it is absolutely necessary to examine the conditions under which *Khomeinism* evolved. In other words, one has to answer a prior question: why and how did *Khomeinism* become the hegemonic voice not only of Shiism but of the opposition to the Shah's regime? How did it successfully isolate its contemporaries among the traditional and modern Iranian discourses? What factors prevented other religious and/or secular discourses from being able to compete with *Khomeinism*? What factors contributed to the success of one among many? To what extent did structural factors and agential factors contribute to the 1979 revolutionary outcomes? To answer these questions, it is the purpose of this chapter to analyse and contextualize the making of *Khomeinism* under the Shah's regime during its final years leading up to the revolution.

## 2. Dialectics of Structure and Agency in Regime Transition

The 1979 Iranian revolution generated a debate over the limited effects of the structural constraints and the significant impact of agency in the revolutionary outcomes. A number of scholars have argued that ideology and leadership play a significant role in the fate and the future of revolutions and the regimes facing the revolutions.[262] Ideology and leadership, Goldstone argues, play a critical role in shaping revolutionary outcomes.[263] Theda Skocpol, the prominent structural theorist of social revolutions, admits that Iran's "remarkable revolution forced me to deepen my understanding of the role of idea systems and cultural understandings in the shaping of social action."[264] In acknowledging the role of agency, she suggests that "if ever there has been a revolution deliberately 'made' by a mass-based social movement aiming to overthrow the old order, the Iranian Revolution against the Shah surely is it."[265] Similarly, Foran and Goodwin argued that the emergence of democratic or non-democratic characteristics of revolutionary outcomes is overwhelmed by the "ideological visions of the new revolutionary leadership," as well as the question of "which set of organized political leaders within the revolutionary coalition is able to consolidate its hold on state power

---

[262] For further discussions, see William Jr. Sewell, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case," *Journal of Modern History* 57 (1985), 57-85; John Foran, "A Theory of Third World Social Revolutions: Iran, Nicaragua, and El Salvador Compared," *Critical Sociology* 19 (1992), 3-27; Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder, CO: Westview,1993); Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin, "Network Analysis, Culture and the Problem of Agency," *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994), 1411-54; Mark Katz, Revolutions and Revolutionary Waves (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); and James Mahoney and Richard Snyder, "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 34 (1999), 3-32.
[263] Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1991)
[264] Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 243.
[265] Ibid, p. 242

after the overthrow of the old regime."[266] As Richard Snyder has it, agencies do not mechanically respond to what structures demand; they are not "passive carriers of fixed interests and identities derived from positions in institutional or social structures."[267]

However, many of these scholars admit that the causes and outcomes of revolutions are better explained once the role and function of structures and agencies are equally and properly acknowledged. One has to map "the institutional and social structures that are the strategic contexts in which these actors operate in order to pinpoint precisely how much room, if any, exists for strategic maneuvering."[268] Any one-sided consideration of the voluntarist position (agency without structural limits) or the structuralist position (structures without agency) undermines the complex and dialectical relations between structure and agency. This dialectical relation suggests that there is always a combination of "a willful action of knowledgeable actors within constraints and possibilities supplied by pre-existing structures."[269] There is always a web of possibilities for agency "to make choices and pursue strategies within given limits." The agents, as Steven Lukes put it, are "both active and structured."[270]

In this chapter, I shall keep an equal distance from structural determinism and extreme voluntarism by examining the extent to which structural constraints and the activities of agencies contributed to the causes and the outcomes of the 1979 Revolution. An operational definition of structure and agency will clarify my argument. I shall ask

---

[266] John Foran and Jeff Goodwin "Revolutionary Outcomes in Iran and Nicaragua: Coalition Fragmentation, War, and the Limits of Social Transformation," *Theory and Society* 22 (1993), 209-47, pp. 210-11

[267] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," in H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 51.

[268] Ibid

[269] William H. Jr. Sewell, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case," p. 60.

[270] Steven Lukes, "Power and Structure," *Essays in Social Theory*, London: 1977, p. 29.

how and why structural constraints evolved under the Shah's regime in three major forms and were affected by three critical relationships: "petrolic neosultanism" (ruler-state relationship), "uneven development" (ruler-society relationship), and the "transnational structure of power under the cold war" (foreign power-domestic actor relationship). In the following section I shall argue that agency was able to "shift strategic postures within the margins of maneuverability"[271] allowed by such structural constraints, and played its role through the following three channels: radical-populist culture, traditional institutions, and charismatic clerical leadership. This dialectical approach provides a proper link between structural constraints and political action, helping to understand the dynamics of *Khomeinism* in the course of Iran's transition from the Shah's neo-sultanistic regime to the post-revolutionary regime.

## 3. Structural Constraints

Structural constraints were rooted in the nature of the Shah's Land Reform in the 1960's and increased oil revenues in the 1970's, which intensified the sultanistic nature of the regime and made the state the sole dominant actor in economic and political structure. They also deepened the uneven structure of development, enlarged the gap between rich and poor, and created new marginal social classes.

---

[271] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," pp. 59-60.

Table 1: Uneven structure of Land Reform (1963-1971) (Land Distribution in 1975)

| Size in Hectares | Percentage of Owners |
| --- | --- |
| Less than 1 | 31.11 |
| 1-1.99 | 13.84 |
| 2-4.99 | 20.41 |
| 5-9.99 | 16.48 |
| 10-49.99 | 16.75 |
| 50-99.99 | .63 |
| 100 or more | .36 |

Source: Markaz-e Amar-e Iran (Statistical Centre of Iran) Tehran: 1358/1980

The Land Reform had mixed results. It relatively weakened the social base of landlordism, as the Shah used the Land Reform as an instrument to marginalize the landlords with no connection or loyalty to his regime, while exempting the lands owned by the royal family and the landlords loyal to the Shah. Hence, land redistribution was selective and uneven because many rural lands were excluded from the Land Reform. The majority of the rural population, the peasantry, received insufficient land. As indicated in table 1, only .36 percent of the people received more than half of the land, while 31.11 percent received only less than one percent of the land. The uneven structure of the Land Reform discouraged the peasantry from working on their land, and pushed them to the urban centers. As suggested in table 2, a significant number of the urban workers in the 1970's migrated to the urban centers due to the loss or shortage of lands.

Table 2: The causes of migration of the urban workers (%)

| Cause of migration | percentage |
| --- | --- |
| Loss of land | 39.1 |
| Shortage of land | 29.1 |
| Scarcity of water | 15.0 |
| Migration with family | 5.8 |
| Low income despite sufficient land | 2.5 |
| Born in towns | 8.3 |

Source: adapted from Assef Bayat, *Workers and Revolution in Iran*, p. 37.

There was a positive correlation between the annual rates of urban population growth and the number of urban migrants in the 1960's: the annual rate of urban population growth increased from 2.3 in 1935-40 to 5.3 in 1957-66, and the number of urban migrants rose from 130,000 in 1941-56 to 250,000 in 1957-66 (Table 3). Hence, the uneven structure of the Land Reform contributed to a significant boost in urban population growth (Table 4), and in doing so created a new disenchanted urban class: the urban poor, a major social base of the 1979 Revolution.

Table 3: Annual Rates of population growth and the urban migrants (1935-76)

| Years | Urban | Rural | No. of urban migrants |
|-------|-------|-------|----------------------|
| 1935-40 | 2.3 | 1.3 | 25,000 |
| 1941-56 | 4.4 | 1.4 | 130,000 |
| 1957-66 | 5.3 | 1.7 | 250,000 |

Source: J. Bharier, *Economic Development in Iran*, 1900-1972 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971

Table 4: Rural and Urban Population (1956-78)

| Year | Urban | Rural | percentage of urbanization |
|------|-------|-------|---------------------------|
| 1956 | 5954 | 13001 | 31.4 |
| 1966 | 9794 | 15995 | 38 |
| 1978 | 17342 | 18167 | 58.8 |

Source: Annual Reports, *Central Bank of Iran* 1351 (1977), 1357 (1978)

The urban poor were concentrated in the major cities where the state provided most services and spent more expenditure. The uneven structure of development was not limited to the urban-rural dichotomy: the state urban developmental plan was unequal

because most urban regions received marginal services. The state spent the most

expenditure in Tehran and a few major cities and as a result the urban poor migrated to a

few giant urban centres (Table 5).

Table 5: Uneven redistribution of state regional development expenditure (1968-1973)

| Region | state expenditure (%) | per capita amount spent |
|---|---|---|
| Central (Tehran, etc,) | 28.3 | 13,710 |
| Isfahan, Yazd | 17.7 | 17,761 |
| Khorasan | 4.8 | 3,896 |
| Kurdestan | 2.4 | 2,530 |
| Hamadan, Lurestan | 1.2 | 1,321 |

Source: Adapted from A. Jabberi and R. Olson, Iran: *Essays on Revolution in the Making* (Lexington: Mazda, 1981) p. 179.

Like Land Reform, increased oil revenues intensified and expanded the state's

direct intervention in politics, society and the economy; it intensified the sultanistic

character of the state. It also put oil at the centre of the economy, and consequently

contributed to the rentier nature of the state. The state and economy became more

dependent on oil rents, and therefore on international economic structures. The oil boom

increased the state oil revenues from $522 million in 1965 to almost $6 billion in 1973,

50 percent of the GNP. The state received $22 billion in oil revenue in 1974, and 77% of

the government revenues and 87% of foreign exchanged earnings came from oil revenues

in 1977-78 (Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6: Oil revenues 1965-78 (million/US$)

| Year | oil revenue | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1965 | 522 | |
| 1968 | 817 | (17% of GNP) |
| 1972 | 2,308 | |
| 1973 | 5,600 | (50% of GNP) |
| 1974 | 22,000 | |
| 1977-78 | 19,000 | 38% of GNP; 77% of govt. revenue; 87% of foreign exchange earnings) |

Source: *The Middle East and North Africa*, 1976-1977, p. 94; and Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, p. 138.

Table 7: Oil and gas sector government revenues (1963-78)

| Plan | | oil-gas sector govt. revenues (percentage) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Third Plan | (1963-7) | 48.1 |
| Fourth Plan | (1968-72) | 55.2 |
| Fifth Plan | (1973-78) | 77.7 |

Source: Annual Reports, *Central Bank of Iran* 1364 (1967), 1351 (1972), 1356 (1977)

Increased oil revenue enhanced the share of the oil industry in the economy, as shown in tables 8 and 9. The oil sector held the highest share of the GDP (51.9 percent) in 1972-73 (table 8) and the highest GNP in 1974-75 (table 9). The increased oil revenues strengthened structural constraints: it made the state the sole actor in the oil industry, and enlarged state power, wealth, and autonomy from social forces.

Table 8: GDP by sector 1963-78) (percentage)

| Sector | 1963-4 | 1968-69 | 1972-73 | 1977-78 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Oil | 21.2 | 25.1 | 51.9 | 35.8 |
| Agriculture | 25.8 | 20.6 | 10.6 | 9.4 |
| Industry | 17.7 | 20.7 | 13.0 | 19.1 |
| Service | 35.2 | 34.1 | 24.5 | 35.7 |
| Total GDP | 348.1 | 578.9 | 2,567.1 | 3.589.1 |

Source: Annual Reports, *Central Bank of Iran* 1971, p. 116 and 1978, pp. 94-95

Table 9: GNP by sector 1959-75 (billions Rials)

| Sector | Year | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1959-60 | 1962-3 | 1968-9 | 1971-2 | 1974-5 |
| Agriculture | 8 5 | 97 | 140 | 172 | 305 |
| Industry | 45 | 58 | 130 | 205 | 464 |
| Service | 108 | 130 | 243 | 375 | 826 |
| Oil | 28 | 38 | 83 | 180 | 1635 |

Source: "National Income of Iran", *Central Bank of Iran.*

The increased oil revenue made the state more independent of domestic forces, yet increasingly dependent on international forces and interventionist in the economy and national and regional politics. The state's first priority became strengthening the military forces and making Iran a regional power allied with the United States. Domestic and international politics contributed to this policy. The Shah's regime was brought to power by the 1953 coup backed by the Americans, and therefore lacked legitimacy. Close ties with the world's superpower was viewed as a domestic substitute. A combination of Iran's geopolitics and the international structure of power under the Cold War provided the Shah with an opportunity to make his regime the closet regional ally of United States. The numbers in tables 10 and 11 illustrate that most oil revenues were spent on military purchases from the United States. This relationship added a new element to Iran's structural constraints in its transition to democracy. In the following parts, I will examine how and why these three structural constraints – "petrolic neosultanism", "uneven development", and the "transnational structure of power under the cold war" – contributed to the fall of the Shah's regime and the rise of a revolutionary regime.

Table 10: Iran's Defence Budget (1953-77)

| Year | Defence budget ($US million) |
|------|------------------------------|
| 1953 | 80 |
| 1963 | 183 |
| 1964 | 880 |
| 1977 | 9,400 |

Source: *US Military Sales to Iran*, Washington, 1976, p. 13 adopted form Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, p. 94 and Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, p. 13

Table 11: US Military Sales to Iran (1950-77)

| Years | US Military Sales ($US million) |
|-------|----------------------------------|
| 1950-69 | 757 |
| 1977 | 4,213 |

Source: Michael Klare, based on *US Dept. of Defense Publications* adopted from Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, p. 95

### 3.1. Petrolic Neo-Sultanism (The ruler-state relationship)

The character of old regimes, to paraphrase Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, shapes the prospects of the new one. Because the legacy of the old regime strongly affects the outcomes of the regime transition it is crucial to analyze the nature of the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah, the last king in Iran's over two thousand-years of monarchy. The Shah's regime maintained major features of a 'neo-sultanistic' regime – the extreme case of (neo) patrimonialism. According to Chehabi and Linz, Max Weber first coined the term "sultanism", referring to "an extreme case of patrimonialism, which in his tripartite classification of the forms of legitimate authority is a form of traditional authority."[272]

---

[272]According to Max Weber, "*Patrimonialism*, in the extreme case, *sultanism* tend to arise whenever traditional domination develops an administration and a military force which are purely personal instruments of the master... Where domination is primarily traditional, even though it is exercised by virtue of the ruler's personal autonomy, it will be called patrimonial authority; where indeed it operates primarily on the basis of discretion, it will be called sultanism..." see Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press,

Nonetheless, Weber's notion of sultanism was characterized by a form of traditional authority, while the Shah's regime was characterized by an "incomplete development of modern legal-rational authority rather than disappearance of all remnants of traditional authority."[273] Distinguishing it from the Weberian use of the term sultanism, Chehabi and Linz argue, one has to refer to such cases as neo-sultanism – an extreme version of neo-patrimonialism.[274] Neo-sultanism, they argue, can be described as a regime

> based on personal rulership, but loyalty to the ruler is motivated not by his embodying or articulating an ideology, nor by a unique personal mission, nor by any charismatic qualities, but by a mixture of fear and rewards to his collaborators....The ruler and his associates do not represent any class or corporate interest. Although such regimes can in many ways be modern, what characterizes them is the weakness of traditional and legal-rational legitimation and the lack of ideological justification.[275]

The "core defining feature of this type of regime," as Richard Snyder put it, is exemplified by "the ruler's maintenance of authority through personal patronage rather than through ideology, charisma, or impersonal law."[276] The structural constraints in this type of regime are clearly determined by the core defining feature of such regimes.

Neo-Sultanism differs from authoritarianism in two significant ways: first, it is less institutionalized and more personalized. Authoritarian regimes maintain a limited social and political pluralism, which creates a variety of structures and institutions from which elites are recruited. This dynamism provides a limited social base to support the regime. Neo-Sultanistic regimes, by contrast, are "clientalist" in structure; they are characterized

---

1978), p. 231, quoted in H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule" in H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 4.

[273] Chehabi and Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule", p.4.

[274] Ibid, pp. 4-5

[275] Ibid, p. 7

[276] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," p. 53.

by the unpredictable paths of career advancement in civil and military administration due to the ruler's arbitrariness in recruitment.[277] The officials in such regimes are promoted or dismissed by the arbitrary will of the ruler, and the ruler's family holds key positions – a fact that is called "dynasticism". Beside dynasticism, it is personalism that is specific to such regimes,[278] which largely depends on invented titles or pseudo-charisma allocated to the leader. "The leaders crave charisma and surround themselves with the trapping of charismatic leadership precisely because they know they lack it."[279] The lack of strong and effective institutions and the absence of charismatic personality on the part of the ruler often lead the regime to appeal to ideology by exalting the nation's glorious past and, to use Eric Hobsbawm's phrase, drawing on an "invented tradition."[280] The function of this ideology resembles "mere window dressing, elaborated after the onset of the ruler's regime to justify it."[281]

---

[277] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule" p. 25.

[278] Ibid, p. 16

[279] Ibid, p. 13

[280] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), quoted in H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule" p.14.

[281] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule" p. 14. According to Chehabi and Linz, "the function of this ideology is different from that of totalitarian systems, where 'leaders, individuals or groups...derive much of their sense of mission, their legitimation, and often very specific policies from their commitment to some holistic conception of man and society'. See Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p. 196. Sultanism differs from totalitarianism in that, like authoritarianism, it lacks a genuine ideology, articulated by pro-regime intellectuals, to legitimize and guide its policy formulation." See Chehabi and Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule," p. 23. The ideologies in sultanistic regimes are "pseudo-ideologies." It is also different from totalitarianism due to the absence of the "fusion between the private and the public roles of the ruler and the lack of commitment to impersonal purposes. Totalitarian dictators... believe in their own mission, and so do their followers. There is a purpose to their rule other than personal enrichment, and for this cause they succeed in mobilizing intellectuals." Moreover, "a third difference with totalitarian regimes, and a consequence of the previous two, is the absence not only of a single party but also of the ancillary organizations such as women's groups and youth groups that were so essential to Nazism and communism." Also, "the final difference from totalitarianism is that sultanistic regimes penetrate their societies very unevenly." Some areas are more controlled and others are left alone. See H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule" p. 24.

Second, neo-sultanistic regimes are characterized by "the absence of the rule of law," making them arbitrary; they regularly violate even their own norms.[282] This is not to suggest that neo-sultanism lacks any kind of rationality, but that rationality serves only the will of the ruler and his clients at the expense of society.[283] Sultanistic regimes are best characterized by the constitutional façade or the "constitutional hypocrisy,"[284] that they merely pay lip service to constitutions and modern democratic procedures.

It is therefore legitimate to argue that in neo-sultanistic regimes, "state" and "regime" are identical.[285] The ruler and institutions of the state, or the ruling clique and the state are essentially fused into one. There is no meaningful distinction between the regime's "soft-liners" and "hard-liners".[286] The regime is unitary and characterized by the ruler and his immediate circle of cliques, who are by definition hard-liners who "prefer to go down with the ship rather than exit gradually and therefore must be forced to give up power."[287] The regime soft-liners are the actors within the regime who perceive their political fate far away from that of the ruler, and hope they may replace him during times of crisis.[288] Sultanistic regimes lack the institutional or political space for the emergence of soft-liners to oppose the ruler's arbitrary will. With the absence or weakness of the regime soft-liner, the "maximalist" opposition or the revolutionaries who seek to

---

[282] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule" p. 25.

[283] Ibid, p. 12

[284] Ibid, p. 17

[285] Ibid, 10

[286] "Four domestic groups are relevant for analysing the dynamics of sultanistic regimes: regime hard-liners, regime soft-liners, the moderate opposition, and the maximalist opposition." For further discussion, see G. O'Donnell and P. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions from Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 15-17. This analytic schema also corresponds to Huntington's fourfold typology of stand patters, reformers, moderators, and extremists; see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 122, quoted in Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," p. 51.

[287] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," pp. 52-3.

[288] Ibid

overthrow the existing regime gain an upper hand over the "moderate" opposition, who are committed not to regime change but a minimal agenda of removing the ruler. The fusion of the state and regime drives the moderates to join the maximalist revolutionaries, committed to removing the arbitrary ruler.[289]

Mohammad Reza Shah came to power in 1941 and was overthrown in 1979. The years of 1941-1953, as Homa Katouzian put it, were the period of interregnum where the "new Shah largely depended on the landlord-*ulama* alliance, although he was also keen to enhance his personal power through the army as well as foreign support."[290] From 1951 to 1953 the Shah did not actually rule the country, because the nationalist and liberal democrat Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq was struggling for the establishment of a parliamentary democracy and the nationalization of oil industries in Iran. Economic constraints, together with hostility "from the Shah, parts of the army, landlords, the religious establishment, Britain, and in the end America" led to the overthrow of Mosaddeq in the 1953 coup.[291] From 1953 to 1963 the post-coup regime took the form of authoritarianism. It was socially backed by the landlords, the religious establishment, and the army, while it was politically and economically supported by the United States. In the meantime the Shah's personal power increased at the expense of his domestic allies. However, a combination of the 1960-62 domestic economic crises and American pressure forced the Shah to listen to the regime's loyal opposition who aimed at implementing a

---

[289] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," p. 52. According to Snyder, "where the military lacks sufficient autonomy to act independently of the dictator – as in Iran, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Zaire – the possibility for political transformation hinges on the efforts of maximalist opposition groups with the coercive resources necessary to defeat the dictator's loyal military." By contrast, in the Philippines, Haiti, and Romania a segment of the military maintained a degree of autonomy and acted against the dictator and thus maximalists were isolated. Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," pp. 53-4.
[290] Homa Katouzian, "The Pahlavi Regime in Iran" in .E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 187.
[291] Ibid

land reform.[292] The reform cabinet did not last, and Prime Minister Amini was forced to resign. The land reform, now in a diluted form and combined with a few other social reforms, was to be instrumental in consolidating the Shah's personal power. The Shah won his 'White Revolution' in a "concocted referendum" in January 1963, but soon lost the confidence of landlords, traditional politicians, the religious establishment, and the urban lower class and middle classes. The riot of June 1963 led by Ayatollah Khomeini was defeated, a historical juncture which made Ayatollah Khomeini a national figure while the Shah became an absolute leader of the land.[293]

Neo-sultanism, or the re-emergence of sultanism in a modern guise, became the main characteristic of the regime during its final years leading up to the 1979 revolution. As Skocpol observes, the Shah himself during 1963-1977 was the state; not a "figurehead monarch, but rather a practicing patrimonial absolutist…without him the state could not function."[294] Similarly, Parsons argues that "to all intents and purposes, the Shah was the regime: monarch and the state had become virtually synonymous."[295] Moreover, "the Shah was at the centre of a series of circles, between which there was little contact except through him – the court, the imperial family, the Central Government, the armed forces SAVAK [the notorious secret police established in 1957 with the assistance of CIA and MOSSAD], and the police."[296] In other words, "the most striking feature of the government," Parsons observes, "was its apolitical nature." [297]

---

[292] Homa Katouzian, "The Pahlavi Regime in Iran," p. 187
[293] Ibid, p. 188
[294] Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, p. 245.
[295] Anthony Parsons, *The Pride and the Fall: Iran, 1974-79* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 19
[296] Ibid
[297] Ibid, p. 30

The change from authoritarianism to neo-sultanism was caused by a number of factors. They included socio-economic factors, the Shah's personality and psychology,[298] the rise of the state's version of modernist ideology as a fusion of Westernism and the official nationalism of ancient Iran illustrated in the 2500th anniversary of Sultanism, and the near absence of independence in military and civilian (political parties, parliament, etc.) institutions.[299] The Shah paid lip service to the constitution and modern political procedures, and yet was very thankful that Iran under his rule was not suffering from democracy. "Thank God," said he to his court minister, "we in Iran have neither the desire nor the need to suffer from democracy."[300] For this reason, Iran's Parliament, the *Majles*, degenerated into a mere rubber stamp. The opposition had no right to establish any political party, and there was no genuine party system while the Shah created a specious two-party system headed by his confidants. The *Melliyon* (Nationalists) and the pseudo-opposition *Mardom* (People's) parties were both founded by the Shah's order, and yet collapsed as the Shah was not even tolerant of such quasi-party competition. In 1963, once the regime turned into a neo-sultanistic one, the Shah effectively established a one-party system by transferring the *Melliyon* party into *Iran-e Novin* (New Iran) headed by then Prime Minister Hasanali Mansur. In March 1975 the *Rastakhiz* (Resurgence) party was formed under order from the Shah to implement his sultanistic ideology in a single-party state.

---

[298] The Shah "was a shy, if not timid, man whose seeming arrogance was a smoke screen to cover his basic lack of self-confidence. He displayed weakness in the face of adversity during the three major crises of his reign: Mosaddeq's premiership, the riots of June 1963, and the revolution of 1977-79", see Homa Katouzian, "The Pahlavi Regime in Iran," p. 204.

[299] Ibid, pp. 188- 89

[300] Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I*, Alinaghi Alikhani, ed. (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1991), p. 233.

The state lacked the support of its own statesmen because the Shah "played bureaucrats and military officers off against one another, never allowing stable coalitions or lines of responsibility to develop."[301] Alam, the Shah's minister of the court, latter wrote that in 1971 the Shah told him, "I don't think there's a single member of the army prepared to betray us. In any event, they're too much at one another's throats to constitute a threat."[302] Similarly, General Fereidun Jam, the former brother-in law of the Shah who served as the professional chief of staff in 1969-71, "found it almost impossible to function in circumstances where none of the commanders had any power in his field of command which stems from responsibility; that is, they were all responsible without having power." The army commanders, he adds,

> had to obtain [the Shah's] prior permission even for nightly operations....It is clear that such an army which in normal times would have to seek permission to breathe, will have no one to lead it in a crisis, and will disintegrate...exactly as it in fact did.[303]

Moreover, the socio-economic factor was of distinct significance in shaping the regimes neo-sultanistic character, as well as its status as a 'rentier' state. The "absence of strong autonomous classes" remained significant because neo-sultanism, unlike democracy and authoritarianism, lacks a social base to support its very existence. The Shah regime and its "neo-sultanistic" character came about largely as a result of "the Shah's abandonment of his former alliance with the landlords and the religious establishment and of his growing independence from the domestic economy (and foreign

---

[301] Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, p. 244.

[302] Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I*, p. 198.

[303] General Fereidun Jam in an interview recorded by Habib Ladjevardi, 14 November 1981 and 10 March 1983, London, IOHCHU, quoted in Homa Katouzian, "The Pahlavi Regime in Iran," p. 195.

aid) owing to rising oil receipts."[304] The Shah's land reform in the 1960s, as Katouzian put it, changed the relations between the state and the autonomous social class of the landlords, transferring "their sociopolitical power directly to the state." To a lesser degree, following the June 1963 riots, the religious establishment faced similar results, and relatively lost "its autonomous influence in social and political affairs and reduced its economic power base by bringing major religious endowments under state administration."[305] Moreover, "the Shah, who effectively was the state, became increasingly independent from the economy and the society, while the latter became increasingly dependent on him and his decisions."[306] This happened largely due to "the increasing flow of oil revenues paid directly to the state,"[307] and enabled the Shah to expand his military-bureaucratic clientele and finance his developmental plan, titled "The White Revolution."[308] Oil financed over 90 percent of imports and 80 percent of the annual budget, and allowed the state to disregard its internal tax base. Thus, the state's major relationships to society were mediated through its expenditures on development projects, and not through taxation. The Iranian state became relatively independent of society, and society had few inputs into the state. Because the state depended not on the citizens but on oil, Iran became a 'rentier' state with little taxation, and consequently, little representation of citizens. Because the state became autonomous from its own citizens, it became unaccountable to their demands and able to resist much of the pressure for reform and change. According to Skocpol, the Shah's regime was a "rentier state,"

---

[304] Homa Katouzian, "The Pahlavi Regime in Iran," p. 188.
[305] Ibid
[306] Ibid
[307] Ibid
[308] Ibid

because it "did not rule through, or in alliance with, any independent social class;" in class terms, the state was hegemonic in relation to the dominant classes.[309]

The external factor was also instrumental in consolidating the personalistic character of the Iranian state in the early 1970's. The Nixon-Kissinger 'doctrine of regional centers of power', following the Vietnam War crisis, assigned a role of regional police to the Iranian state. While the United States was providing highly sophisticated weaponry, military technicians, and advisors to Iran, the Iranian state was supplying manpower in military regional interventions, such as the 1972 military intervention in Oman. In the absence of the state's popular legitimacy and its dependence on oil revenues, the Shah's dependence on America served the interests of his personalistic power. The more the fusion of the Shah and the state took place and the more the Shah relied upon the state's dependent-coercive apparatus, the oil revenues, and the United States, the more the Shah removed himself from society.[310]

For the reasons discussed above, in the long run, during the revolutionary crisis, the state/Shah dependence became the very antithesis of its survival. When the Shah became the target of the mass-urban movement, neither a single social class in society nor any military-bureaucratic statesman could save the state from the waves of the revolution. There was no one in the regime who could credibly negotiate a pact with the opposition. "The revolution was the product of the unity of all social classes in opposing the state and, hence, one man alone. That is why almost every conceivable ideology and political program was represented in it: Islamist, religious democratic, non-religious

---

[309] Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, p. 244.
[310] David Jorjani, "Revolution in the Semi-periphery: The Case of Iran," in Terry Boswell, ed. *Revolution in the World System* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 136.

democratic, and all the main varieties of Marxist-Leninist ideas and parties."[311] In the end, the petrolic-neosultanistic state under the Shah proved extremely fragile in the face of a massive populist alliance of aggrieved social forces acting under favourable circumstances.

### 3.2. Uneven Development (ruler-society relations)

According to Max Weber, "under the dominance of a patrimonial regime only certain types of capitalism are able to develop."[312] The political economy of development under such regimes is largely affected by personalism and arbitrariness. The case with a modern patrimonial regime like that of the Shah's neo-sultanism was much more complicated.[313] The Shah's regime enjoyed an advanced state apparatus and maintained greater arbitrariness, which negatively affected the regime's policy of development and caused a condition of 'uneven development' in three different but interrelated meanings.

#### i. uneven economic and political development

First, uneven development failed to establish a 'uniform' economic and political development, so that the political structure was left far behind the economic one. In other words, a relatively fair economic development was achieved at the expense of political development. While much of the oil revenue was productively invested in the industrial economy, problems emerged when the regime failed to reconcile its contradictory neo-

---

[311] Homa Katouzian, "The Pahlavi Regime in Iran," p. 204.

[312] According to Max Weber, under patrimonialism "there is wide scope for actual arbitrariness and the expression of purely personal whims on the part of ruler and the members of his administrative staff.' [Indeed], 'two bases of the rationalization of activity are entirely lacking; namely, a basis for the calculability of obligations and of the extent of freedom which will be allowed to private enterprise." Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 238-40, 1095, 1097, quoted in H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule" p. 21.

[313] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule" p. 22.

sultanistic nature with the emerging demands for political participation.[314] This structural disequilibrium between economic and political development, as Ervand Abrahamian put it, meant that the Shah failed to make political modifications appropriate to the economic and social changes taking place in the society. The failure of state-society relations resulted in the collapse of the links between social and political structures; it blocked the transfer of social grievances into the political structure' and eventually widened the existing gap between the social forces and the political elites.[315]

The intellectuals and new middle class, as Mirsepassi put it, "had every reason to be opposed to the regime. The Pahlavi regime was both arrogant and deeply conservative, and Iranian intellectuals had no compassion for either of these traits. 'Thus in an age of republicanism, radicalism and nationalism, the Pahlavi regime appeared in the eyes of the intelligentsia to favour monarchism, conservatism, and Western imperialism.'"[316] For the new middle class, "the Shah's modernization program was not criticized for being modern, but because it failed to achieve modernity in the fullest meaning of the term."[317]

The post-1953 Shah's regime failed to restore its legitimacy in the eyes of the middle class. The Shah indeed never trusted the middle class and did not allow them to engage in meaningful political participation. The middle class in return was politically, culturally, and in the later years, economically dissatisfied with the regime. Following the oil boom (1973-77) the Shah accelerated his economic development plan. For a short period of time the politically dissatisfied new middle class gained some economic benefits, raised its standard of living and, therefore, did not actively protest the regime.

---

[314] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*,pp. 419-448.

[315] Ibid, p. 427

[316] Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989), p. 17.

[317] Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 76.

However, the fall of oil prices, the weakness of Iran's economic infrastructure, and the failure of the Shah's rapid modernization put an end to their passivity and patience. Already politically and culturally dissatisfied, the new middle class now had every reason to raise its voice.

The Shah, too, was dissatisfied: he had failed to open the "gates of the great civilization" (the Shah's famous rhetoric for his modernization project) for the people. The Shah's two-party system also had failed to extend the regime's social base and institutional strength. But the Shah's response to this failure became even worse; it intensified not the regime's social or institutional base, but its neo-sultanistic tendencies. In March 1975, establishing a single-state party of *Rastakhiz*, the Shah appealed to the lower classes, and utilized a populist fascist-type mobilisation to hide the regime's crisis: he forced everybody to join the party or leave the country. This obviously left no valid reason for the new middle class to support the regime and remain silent. More importantly, the Shah's semi-populism broke the regime's relatively strong links with the fairly new class of industrialists sponsored by the regime itself. The Shah's 'White Revolution' had put in place the regime's policy of import substitution, tax exemption and state licensing granted to a close circle of its clients, and it facilitated the growth of a new industrial class. However, the Shah's new semi-populist policy was considered to be a backlash against the new industrial class because the regime increased business taxes by 80 percent, decreased industrial profit margins by 15 percent, and ordered hundreds of companies to sell 49 percent of their shares to their own workers and the general public.[318] Yet, the Shah's intention was not fulfilled because his policy did not enlarge the regime's social base, as the workers and the general public refused to believe in the

---

[318] Hossein Bashiriyeh, *The State and Revolution in Iran, 1962-1982* (Croom Helm, 1983), p. 92.

regime since the economic plan itself had failed. The new class of entrepreneurs lost trust in the Shah's regime that threatened its socio-economic position. In the end the Shah was alone. As Chehabi and Linz discuss, the narrow social base of neo-sultanism and the near absence of regime links with civil society discouraged pro-business and capitalist classes from supporting the regime, and left the social base of the regime restricted to the ruler and his clients.[319] Thus, the Shah's regime became increasingly isolated in the late 1970's.

### ii. uneven economic structure

The state of uneven development polarized the economic structure and shaped a 'dual society' with conflicting traditional and semi-industrial economies. The regime's economic policy contributed to economic growth and yet lacked the very concept of development, because economic growth alone did not introduce economic development. The Shah's policy of economic development, as Homa Katouzian observes, was a policy of "pseudo-modernism," relying not on the people but on its "petrolic despotism." Economically, the regime's "pseudo-modernism" polarized the socio-economic structure; politically, the regime's "petrolic despotism" blocked the path for political development. The Shah thus failed both in political and economic development.[320] The polarization of the socio-economic system became a major source of uneven development, with disappointment and frustration among all social groups.

The regime's "distorted capitalism" and neo-sultanistic tendencies broke the few connections from the past between the bazaaris and the political system. The Shah explicitly expressed his "mission" to modernize the economy. "I could not stop building

---

[319] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule" p. 20.

[320] Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran* (London and New York: Macmillan and New York University Press, 1981).

supermarkets. I wanted a modern country. Moving against the bazaars was typical of the political and social risks I had to take in my drive for modernization."[321] The bazaar was declining and in the words of a bazaari observer "dying." "If we let him," says a bazaari, "the Shah will destroy us. The banks are taking over. The big stores are taking away our livelihoods. And the government will flatten our bazaars to make space for state officer."[322] In 1963 the bazaar's share of "domestic trade" in GDP was 9.4 percent, while in 1977-78 its share sharply declined to 5.7 percent.[323] The Bazaaris were to be the main target of the regime, given the Shah's failure to deal with the economic crisis. The regime blamed bazaaris for inflation and launched an "anti-profiteering crusade" to control the bazaaris business. Many bazaaris were fined; others were imprisoned and banned from doing business.[324] The *Rastakhiz* party dissolved all the independent guilds and created a chamber of commerce appointed by the state authority. The regime sought control of the bazaar by importing a large amount of goods to undercut the bazaari trade, and planning to replace the location of Tehran's bazaar by a new freeway. Ironically, this plan polarized the socio-economic system, frustrating both traditional and modern classes and, even worse, creating a new dissatisfied social class of the urban poor.

A new social group identified as the urban poor emerged from the failure of the Shah's land reform and policy of rapid urbanization. The urban poor consisted largely of unfortunate rural migrants – mostly farmers or those with agricultural jobs – who were equally "unfortunate participants in the new urban social structure of the country."[325]

---

[321] Quoted from Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: from Monarchy to Islamic Republic* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 63.

[322] Ervand Abrahanian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 444.

[323] John Foran, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), p. 67.

[324] Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin*, p.17.

[325] Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization*, p. 75.

Within a decade (1966-1976), Iran's urban population rose from 38 percent to 47 percent, and major cities received over two million rural migrants.[326] "The tide of landless peasants pouring into the cities in search of work rose from around 30,000 a year in the 1930s and 130,000 annually from 1941 to 1956, to 250,000 a year for 1957-1966 and 330,000 a year between 1967 and 1976."[327] The land reform failed because it did not give any land to half of the landless peasantry, and the other half received lands too small for supporting families, leaving them no option but migrating to major cities.[328] Moreover, the land reform did not provide capital for the peasants who had received lands, capital which was instead unevenly and unsuccessfully allocated to highly mechanised farms and agribusiness corporations. The Shah's uneven development satisfied neither the traditional nor the modern sectors of agriculture. Instead, it turned Iran from a net food exporter in the 1960's to a net importer of agricultural products, costing annually one billion dollars in the 1970's.[329]

The Shah's version of modernization did nothing to improve urban migrants' new life, nor did these newly uprooted migrants comprehend the changes. Instead, they realized they did not "escape from marginality," but found themselves once again in a "struggle for subsistence."[330] The regime's economic crisis in the late 1970's worsened the situation: The victims of the Shah's land reform were by-products of the regime's uneven development. Paradoxically, the newly industrial class and the modern business class were equally disappointed with the Shah's vision of modernization. This, too,

---

[326] Hossein Bashiriyeh, *The State and Revolution in Iran, 1962-1982*, p. 88.

[327] John Foran, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution*, p. 337.

[328] John Foran, "The Iranian Revolution of 1977-79: A Challenge for Social Theory," in John Foran, ed., *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. 167-68.

[329] Ervand Abrahanian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 447.

[330] Farhad Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran: The Migrants Poor, Urban marginality and Politics* (New York: New York View Press, 1980), p. 45.

publicized all the hidden contradictions associated with the regime's developmental project, which will be discussed as the third aspect of the regime's uneven development.

### iii. uneven dependent development

Iran's socio-economic structure under the Shah was also unevenly influenced by the world economic system. This is explained by the theory of "dependent development". In the post-1953 period the relation between the Shah and the West rapidly grew following the Shah's restoration through a joint CIA/MI6 coup. In the 1960's, international pressure and domestic needs pushed the regime to open the economy to foreign investments. This and the foreign exchange earnings from national oil resources moved the country from periphery to semi-periphery of the world capitalist system. Foreign trade increased from $162 million in 1954 to $42 billion by 1978. The GDP grew at 10.8 percent annually between 1963 and 1978, and the GNP rose from $3 billion in 1953 to $53 billion in 1977. Despite these achievements, the Shah's policy of development failed to serve the interests of both traditional and modern social classes, as it primarily served foreign business interests. As discussed earlier, fuelled by oil revenues and in response to the economic crisis the Shah launched his land reform and pushed for rapid industrialization and urbanization. The regime's dependent-development plan destroyed traditional agriculture, but failed to create a modern alternative for national agriculture to evolve, undermined by the $2.6 billion of annual food imports and extensive foreign agribusiness operations. The traditional bazaar economy and the guild artisans were squeezed with cheap imports and pressed by arbitrary measures of the state.[331] The regime's incomplete modernization turned out to be a distortion of capitalist

---

[331] John Foran, "The Iranian Revolution of 1977-79: A Challenge for Social Theory," pp. 167-68.

growth: while it created modern social classes it failed to meet their socio-political demands.

Uneven development illustrates ruler-society relations as seen from a political economy approach. In addition to this approach, ruler-society relations can also illustrate the degree to which societal elites are politically included or excluded by the regime. According to Richard Snyder, "the degree of inclusion of domestic elites within the patronage network influences the growth of both maximalist and moderate oppositions. When the dictator's patronage network is inclusive, penetrating deeply into society, political space for opposition groups is narrow."[332] Yet the regime's exclusion of the societal elite, as Richard Snyder put it, "cannot by itself predict whether that regime will move toward revolution."[333] Structural conditions without agencies cannot bring about revolutions. Revolutionary outcomes are closely linked to "the organizational capacities and strategic choices of maximalist and moderate opposition groups, the coalition options available to moderates," the absence or presence of "political cultures of opposition, the lack of effective leaders, and state repression" and the ruler's "ability to counter challenge to his control of the state."[334] The Shah's personalistic regime was toppled by the revolution because moderates in the opposition lacking soft-line allies within the regime chose to join the revolutionaries. A broad and effective coalition between moderates and maximalists emerged. The "maximalists, who had coercive and organizational resources superior to those of their moderate allies, easily dominated these

---

[332] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," p. 56.

[333] The exclusionary neo-sultanistic regimes, as Snyder put it, could end up in experiencing a revolutionary transition (Iran, Nicaragua, and Cuba), or encountering a military coup (Haiti), or transforming into a civilian rule (the Philippines). See Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," p. 56.

[334] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," pp. 56-57.

coalitions and used the moderates as stepping-stones to state power, turning against them after the common goal of removing the dictator had been achieved."[335] This will be discussed at greater length in the next section.

### *3.3. The Transnational Structure of Power (foreign power-domestic actor relationship)*

"An opportunity," writes Steven Lukes, "is the absence of an external constraint, that is, the presence of an external permissive condition."[336] In other words, this opportunity is a "negative constraint" in preventing or promoting a particular action.[337] The transnational structure of power under the shadow of the Cold War was favourable to the making of *Khomeinism* and conducive to revolutionary outcomes in three different ways. The international impact, however, was "mediated by the configuration of domestic actors."[338] First, under the shadow of the Cold War, liberal and leftist individuals, ideas and institutions were considered to be the regime's major threats. Post-1953 Iranian politics as driven by the Shah undermined the whole republican structure with its politics, and destroyed secular and progressive Muslim – liberal or left-wing – parties. But the traditional clerical institutions remained almost untouched, largely due to the long history of clerical quietism and passive cooperation with the state. The clerical anti-leftist tradition, too, provided the clerical establishment with a relatively safe institutional haven. Second, the US-Shah relationship was essentially patron-client. The foreign patron's supply of critical military aid and material resources was used by the regime to help fuel its domestic patronage networks. This in fact allowed "the ruler to

---

[335] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," pp. 56-57.
[336] Steven Lukes, "Power and Structure," *Essays in Social Theory*, p.11
[337] Ibid
[338] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," p. 58.

detach his repressive state apparatus from its social base and dispense with domestic coalition building."[339] The dependence on American patronage contributed to the success of the maximalist opposition, who were Khomeinists. Third, during the last months of the Shah's regime the confusing, contradictory, even "non-action" of the United States facilitated the success of the revolution, and pushed the revolution to its final phase.[340] Having received such mixed signals the Shah became confused and mistrusted President Carter's policy towards Iran. President Carter decided to spend the 1978 New Year's Eve with the Shah in Tehran. At the dinner President Carter praised the Shah's leadership, stating that because of "the respect, admiration and love which your people give to you," Iran is "an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world."[341] But President Carter's reference to human rights and pressures for liberalization worried the Shah.

Iran joined the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO), the line of pro-Western states along the southern borders of the former Soviet Union, from Turkey to Pakistan, and became part of 'The Northern Tier' following the overthrow of Mosaddeq.[342] Logically the United States became the key external factor in determining the Shah regime's internal and external policies: "The closest relations of all," Fred Halliday observes, "were with the administration of Richard Nixon (1969-74) during which Iran emerged as the dominant regional power with full US support."[343] The Shah was made the 'policeman' of the Persian Gulf, provided with whatever non-nuclear sophisticated arms and military

---

[339] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," p. 58.
[340] John Foran, "The Iranian Revolution of 1977-79: A Challenge for Social Theory," pp. 170-71.
[341] James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 233.
[342] Fred Halliday, *Iran, Dictatorship and Development* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), P. 252.
[343] Ibid, P. 253

equipment he wanted. Through this period, the US military sales to Iran reached some $20 billion.[344] President Jimmy Carter changed the American post-Vietnam policy by promoting a policy of human rights. American insistence on limited liberalization and limited coercion undermined the Shah's ability to control politics in his preferred way and still adapt to the patron's new demands. The Shah released some political prisoners and began to somewhat liberalize the political atmosphere. But President Carter remained unsure whether the US should continue supporting the Shah. Since President Carter did not have strong feelings towards the Shah, nor a policy to deal with the revolution, the Shah was left uncertain about his response to the gathering crisis. Hence, "the world-system conjuncture," as John Foran suggests, "was favourable to the success of the revolution in the sense that the core world power did not aggressively intervene to prevent it."[345]

The world-system also had considerable economic impact on the revolutionary movement. The incorporation of the state into the world capitalist system pushed the regime to enlarge its influence over the traditional institutions of the bazaar and clerical establishments, which were pre-capitalist in nature and origin. In reaction, these previously apolitical institutions became strong opponents of the state. As Iran turned from the periphery to semi-periphery of the world-system, the Shah's politics of modernization increased internal contradictions. The Shah's inability to deal with these contradictions, made worse by the world economic recession resulting from the 1973 oil crisis, intensified domestic unrest and increasingly de-legitimized the Iranian state.[346]

---

[344] For a successful analysis on the Shah' regional policy, see Fred Halliday, *Iran, Dictatorship and Development*, Pp. 266-280.

[345] John Foran, "The Iranian Revolution of 1977-79: A Challenge for Social Theory," pp. 170-71.

[346] David Jorjani, "Revolution in the Semiperiphery: The Case of Iran," p. 130.

## 4. Participation of "Active and Structured" Agency

Karl Marx wrote that "men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past."[347] Marx's account of the relations between structure and agency suggests that there is a web of possibilities for an agent to make choices, but only within certain constraints of pre-existing structures. However, equally important is the fact that political actors are not "passive carriers of fixed interests and identities derived from positions in institutional or social structures." Agents do not mechanically play parts demanded by structures, but are "both active and structured."[348] The existing social structures are products of human actions invested with cultural meanings.[349] Social structures "are the residues or precipitates of many past intentional actions and are maintained or transformed by actions."[350] Similarly, "ideological structures" are by-products of "human will," and "undergo continuous reproduction and/or transformation as a result of combined willful actions of more or less knowledgeable actors within the constraints and possibilities supplied by pre-existing structures."[351]

In this section I will examine how and why *Khomeinism* as an idea and movement took advantage of structural opportunities, opening a path for itself out of the Shah's neo-sultanistic regime. The making of *Khomeinism* indicates that agents are not passive carriers of social structures. The radical-populist culture, traditional institutions, and the

[347] Karl Marx, "The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in R.C. Tucker (ed.) *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978).
[348] Steven Lukes, "Power and Structure," *Essays in Social Theory*. London: 1977, p. 29.
[349] Michael Taylor, "Structure, culture, and action in the explanation of social change," in William Booth et al. eds., *Politics and Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 123.
[350] Michael Taylor, "Structure, culture, and action in the explanation of social change," p. 90.
[351] William H. Jr. Sewell, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case, "*Journal of Modern History*, 57, (1985), p. 60.

charismatic clerical leadership- in other words the trilogy of *ideas*, *institutions*, and *individuals*- were three agencies that made *Khomeinism* successful.

## 4.1. The Hegemony of Radical-Populist Culture

There is a dynamic interaction between culture and social structure. While structural conditions affect the success of a particular cultural system, the capacity of particular cultural ideas "to organize social actions affects the historical opportunities actors are able to seize."[352] Historical opportunities exist in "periods of social transformation" in which "cultural meanings are more highly articulated, because they model patterns of action that do not 'come naturally.'"[353] Therefore, in periods of social transformation a selective aspect of cultural heritage is strategically used by the actors. In other words, the question, as Swidler put it, is not "to try to estimate how much culture shapes action;" the question instead is "how culture is used by actors, how cultural elements constrain or facilitate patterns of action, [and] what aspects of a cultural heritage have enduring effects on action."[354] This is to suggest that "both the influence and the fate of cultural meanings depend on the strategies of action."[355] These strategies of action are established by "ideologies", highly articulated belief systems aiming "to offer a unified answer to problems of social action."[356] Ideologies are different from cultural traditions, yet under certain historical circumstances, such as revolutionary conditions, cultural traditions and religious systems transform into ideologies. As Clifford Geertz observes, ideologies such as ideological Islam come "to 'hold' rather than be 'held' by

---

[352] Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review,* 51(1986), p. 283.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid, p. 284
[356] Ibid, p. 279

one's beliefs."[357] Similarly, as Skocpol put it, "cultural idioms have a long-term, more anonymous, and less partisan existence than ideologies."[358] Ideologies are "idea systems deployed as self-conscious political arguments by identifiable political actors....when political actors construct ideological arguments for particular action-related purposes; they invariably use or take account of available cultural idioms."[359] Ideologies are therefore drawn upon by social actors seeking to use cultural idioms to make sense of their actions and of themselves in revolutionary conditions. They are deep-rooted in, and yet essentially differ from, cultural traditions. The implication of this argument for the case of revolutionary Iran is that it helps understanding the great diversity of ideological discourses Iran held in the course of the revolution. It also explains why one ideology instead of another triumphed. In this approach, the cultural system is not "unified", but instead contains "chunks of culture, each with its own history and resources for constructing organized strategies of action."[360]

Unlike what conventional arguments suggest, pre-revolutionary Iran never experienced a homogeneous, unified clerical Islamic culture. Pre-revolutionary Iran maintained chunks of cultural and political discourses, representing their own histories and social bases while reflecting multiple aspects of pre-revolutionary social cleavages. Leaving aside a traditional clerical quietism, there were diverse ideological interpretations of Islam within the grand alliance that led to the 1979 Revolution. The first three Islamic discourses were *Khomeinism*, Ali Shariati's Islamic-left ideology, and

---

[357] Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 61.
[358] Theda Skocpol, "Cultural Idioms and Political Ideologies in the Revolutionary Reconstruction of State Power: A Rejoinder to Sewell," *Journal of Modern History,* 57 (1985), p. 91.
[359] Ibid
[360] Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," p. 283.

Mehdi Bazargan's liberal-democratic Islam. The fourth discourse was that of the socialist guerrilla groups, with Islamic and secular variants; and the fifth was that of secular constitutionalism, with nationalist and Marxist varieties.[361]

### 4.1.1. Khomeinism

The most important cultural-political discourse in defining the 1979 Iranian Revolution was introduced by Ayatollah Rohollah Musavi Khomeini (1902-1989) – a high ranking Shiite cleric – whose populist and radical-militant discourse became the political ideology called *Khomeinism*. In defining *Khomeinism* one needs to understand what is not *Khomeinism*: it is neither traditionalism nor fundamentalism, neither symbolizes a pre-modern movement nor a post-modern phenomenon. It is not traditionalism, since Ayatollah Khomeini departed radically from the Shiite tradition of political quietism in the face of socio-political injustice. Traditional Shiism, from which *Khomeinism* departed, sought the greatest distance of religion from politics in order to preserve the sacred ground of religion from the corrupting influence of politics.

*Khomeinism* is not fundamentalism. The term fundamentalism, as Abrahamian indicates, derived from American Protestantism and implies the literal interpretation of scriptural texts. *Khomeinism* was built upon a political and pragmatic reinterpretation of religious scripture that evolved into revolutionary populism.[362]

Similarly, it makes little sense to characterize *Khomeinism* as anti-modern or even pre-modern, given its profound engagement with the modern world such as its ability to

---

[361] There are similar ways of classifying Iranian sub-politiocal culture. See John Foran, *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 173-75; Valentine Moghadam, "Islamic Populism, Class, and Gender in Post-revolutionary Iran," in John Foran, ed., *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) and Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[362] Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, pp. 13-17.

equip itself with modern technologies of organization, surveillance, warfare, and propaganda. *Khomeinism* refashioned and institutionalized a modern theocracy. The "whole constitutional structure of the Islamic Republic," Abrahamian observes, "was modeled less on the early caliphate than on de Gaulle's Fifth Republic."[363] *Khomeinism* is a novel discourse with an emphasis on the cultural and political reconstruction of a nation. The popularity of *Khomeinism* emerged from Ayatollah Khomeini's political critique of the Shah regime's corrupt dictatorship and its relationship with the West. He frequently cited the Quranic promise that the *mostakberin* (oppressors) shall be defeated and "the *mostazafin* (oppressed) shall inherit the earth." His political critique of the Shah's absolutism and Western imperialism was more popular than his theory of the *velayat-e faqih* (rule by an Islamist jurist). Ayatollah Khomeini's ideologized account of that tradition offered the country hope of relief from the ill effects of absolutism and imperialism, and led to the formation of a nationwide populist revolutionary coalition. Its primary social base, however, was made up of the clerical class, the bazaari elements, and the urban poor.

Finally, in spite of its critique of modernity, *Khomeinism* is not a postmodern phenomenon. The Islamic discourse of *Khomeinism* explicitly associated itself with intellectual absolutism, insisting on the absolute representation of the Truth. Central to *Khomeinism* is its anti-hermeneutic claim, insisting that the *core* meaning of the Quran is absolutely clear and not open to interpretation. This approach is contrary to much post-modernism, which rejects any kind of intellectual foundation. Post-modernity is largely anti-foundational, while like other versions of Islamism, *Khomeinism* insists on some

---

[363] Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, p. 15.

absolute *a priori* foundation as the basis of its ideology.[364] The nature and meaning of *Khomeinism* will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

### 4.1.2. Ali Shariati's radical-left Islamic ideology

The second political sub-culture in pre-revolutionary Iran was the radical-left Islamic ideology of Dr. Ali Shariati (1933-77) – the most celebrated non-clerical intellectual in the 1979 Revolution. He succeeded in producing, writes Abrahamian, "a radical layman's religion that disassociated itself from the traditional clergy and associated itself with the secular trinity of social revolution, technological innovation, and cultural self-assertion." He, indeed, "produced exactly what the young intelligentsia craved."[365]

Ali Shariati was a man of his time. His thinking was very much influenced by the socio-political conditions of pre-revolutionary Iran. He was deeply critical of passive and quietist traditional Islam, and argued that individual and social responsibilities are central to Islam: the people, not God, are responsible for their own destiny. He contended strongly that Islam encourages and endorses social justice, and was critical of the Shah's regime's brutal despotism as he called for an Islam that seeks freedom. The core of Shariati's discourse emphasized liberty (*azadi*), equality (*barabari*), and spirituality (*erfan*). In other words, his discourse was about freedom and democracy without capitalism, social justice and socialism without authoritarianism, and religion without

---

[364] See Michel Foucault's views on the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Giving his radical critique of universalism, rationality and modernity, Michel Foucault was fascinated by the 1979 Iranian Revolution. He visited Iran in September and November 1978 and also met Ayatollah Khomeini at his exile residence in Paris in October. Foucault was fascinated by the Iranian experience, because he thought revolutionary Iran was "the birth of ideas," which eventually could signal the beginning of a new form of "political spirituality." For a thoughtful critique of Foucault and his views on the Iranian Revolution, see Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, *Michel Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and Seductions of Islamism* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[365] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 473.

clericalism. In his writings he provided a critique of power, of political dictatorship (*esetbdad*), of material injustice (*estesmar*) and of religious alienation (*estehmar*).

Shariati's biographer Ali Rahnema writes that Shariati "was a master synthesizer and himself a synthesis."[366] Shariati was "an individualist at war with individualism and a militant of social cause, ever evading the masses. A firm believer in the inevitability of change and the necessity of adaptation, he was a modernist who usually detested the persistence of outmoded traditions, customs and institutions."[367] Ali Shariati was as Rahnema proposes, a "synthesis of the cultural and political traditions of the east and the west," and he "looked at the east through western eyes and at the west through eastern eyes."[368]

Shariati articulated a humanist Islamic discourse appealing to the educated middle class and keeping it at a distance from clerical thinking. He accused the clergy of 'monopolistic control' over the interpretation of Islam in order to set up a clerical despotism (*estebdade ruhani*); in his words, it would be "the worst and the most oppressive form of despotism possible in human history."[369] In Shariati's view the people and not the privileged class receives the message of God. "It was precisely over the issue of clerical authority," Abrahamian argues, that Shariati called for an Islamic Reformation.[370] But an Islamic Reformation, as Abrahamian observes, remains a difficult task, since the clerics (*ulama*) have provided the dominant interpretation of Islam over the centuries. Shariati's project for an Islamic rebirth required answers to difficult

---

[366] Ali Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), P. 370.
[367] Ibid
[368] Ibid
[369] Ali Shariati, *Collected Works*, vol. 10 (Tehran: Ferdowsi, 1360/1981) p. 56.
[370] Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989), p. 119.

questions: If Shiism is a revolutionary ideology, then why is it burdened by reactionary clerical establishments? If revolutionary ideologies are capable of changing society, then why did Shiism fail? And, if it had failed in the past how could it be prevented from failing in the future?[371]

In Shariati's view, Iran's progress required raising public consciousness through a radical transformation of social order, through a social and not merely a political revolution. Thus, the question requiring a critical answer was where Iran was in the historical process. Shariati's answer was that contemporary Iran still remained in the age of faith, as Europe was in the late feudal era on the eve of the European Renaissance. The *rushanfekran* (intelligentsia), Shariati argued, is the critical conscience of society, and obliged to launch a 'Renaissance' and 'Reformation'. Shariati changed his earlier position in "*Ummat va Emamat*" and argued in "*Bazgasht*" that the intelligentsia should not command the people. Shariati came to believe that the role of the intellectuals should be to provide critical analysis of material reality instead of providing a future blueprint to the people.

A radical and critical account of the status quo was in many ways congruent with the demands of the university students, middle class intellectuals, and the urban classes of workers and migrants. Shariati's popularity came to exceed almost all other religious and secular intellectuals in pre-revolutionary Iran. Hence, Shariati is widely regarded as the 'Voltaire' of the 1979 revolution. And yet, writes Boroujerdi, Shariati was "ignored by the secularists, admonished by the clerics, and punished by the Shah's regime...The first

---

[371] Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin*, pp. 123-124.

camp considered him peripheral, the second treated him as an *enfant terrible*, and the third viewed him as a troublesome Islamic-Marxist who needed to be silenced."[372]

### 4.1.3. Liberal Islam

Liberal Islam was the third element of influence in pre-revolutionary Iran. Its adherents sought political power through principles of constitutionalism and parliamentary democracy by advocating for the accommodation of Islam with liberal-democracy. Mehdi Bazargan (1905-1990), Yadollah Sahabi, the liberal cleric Mahmood Taleghani, and their associated political party, the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), represented the politics of liberal Islam. Its supporters were mostly formed among the modern bourgeoisie, some merchants, the modern middle class, a small segment of the clergy, and some segments of students and teachers.

### 4.1.4. Guerrilla-militant ideology

Left-wing guerrilla organizations with a revolutionary ideology, such as the Islamic *Mojahedin* and the Marxist *Fadaian*, were the fourth tendency in pre-revolutionary Iran. The *Mojahedin Khalq Organization* (MKO), established in 1965, was a revolutionary Muslim organization which reinterpreted Shi'a Islam through the lens of Marxism.[373] The Organization of People's *Fadaian* Guerrillas (OPFG), formed in 1971, was a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary organization independent of the Soviet Union and

---

[372] Mehrzad Boroujerd*i*, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), p. 105.

[373] The founding members of the MKOincluded, but were not limited to, Mohammad Hanifnezhad, Saeed Mohsen, Ali Asghar Badizadegan. In 1975, the organization split into two parts when some members such as Mohammad Taghi Shahram, Bahram Aram, Hossein Rouhani, and Torab Haghshenas accepted Marxism, purged the Muslim members and killed some of them. After the 1979 Revolution the Marxists formed the *Peykar* (Struggle) Organization and the Muslims revived the MKO.

Communist China.[374] The guerrilla-militant ideology perceived armed struggle as both tactic and strategy. It was argued that armed struggle could make the regime vulnerable in the eyes of the public, mobilize the people, and pave the way for a popular revolution. This leftist ideology was attractive to some segments of the university students, intellectuals, and workers. In addition to the left-wing guerrilla organizations, the militant clergy and their bazaari allies formed the right-wing religious guerrilla organizations, of which the Coalition of Islamic Associations (*Hey'athaye Mo'talefe-ye Islami*), with some informal ties to Ayatollah Khomeini, was of significance. Formed in 1963, the group was behind the assassination of Prime Minister Hasan-Ali Mansour.

### 4.1.5. Secular constitutionalists

The fifth tendency was that of secular constitutionalists, which included liberal-nationalists and republican-Marxists. The former were followers of Mosaddeq's National Front, supported by a small segment of the merchant class, service workers and professionals. The members of the *Tudeh* Party of Iran and a small portion of the intelligentsia were republican Marxists.

Given this diversity of political forces in pre-revolutionary Iran, it is misleading to suggest that there was an essentialist, monolithic, wholesale and unified concept of Islamic discourse. The 1979 Iranian Revolution was a populist coalition of Left and Right, religious and secular trends, and liberal and socialist movements. Out of this situation emerged a set of ideas and ideologies that mobilized the people. The question, however, remains why *Khomeinism* came to dominate the revolutionary field.

---

[374] The founding members of the organization were Bizhan Jazani, Masoud Ahmadzadeh, Amir-Parviz Pouyan, and Hamid Ashraf. After the 1979 Revolution they became massive and turned to the largest and most influential left organization in post-revolutionary Iran.

### 4.1.5. The domination of Khomeinism

Radicalism and populist-Islamism contributed to the rise and popularity of *Khomeinism*. *Khomeinism* was a revolutionary discourse, and radicalism was the hegemonic political culture of the 1960's and 1970's. The formation of an autocratic state in post-1953 Iran had blocked all peaceful paths to democracy. It successfully destroyed the weak democratic and secular political institutions. Moreover, the failure of the Shah's autocratic modernization and the decline of secular (nationalist and the leftist) groups in the late 1960's contributed to the rise of an alternative Islamic discourse. Ayatollah Khomeini was certainly a radical and revolutionary cleric in the late 1970's, but was not always a maximalist. Like most clerics Ayatollah Khomeini, particularly in the pre-1963 period, believed in the traditional quietism of Shia Islam. Neither the 1963 uprising nor the early years of exile made Ayatollah Khomeini into a radical and revolutionary thinker. He was a constitutionalist, but then only during the 1970's emerged as a radical leader of the opposition as his rhetoric became increasingly modern and politically relevant. Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of the *velayat-e faqih*, which became the official blueprint of the Islamic Republic, was his least popular idea in the course of the revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini's popularity had more to do with his revolutionary rhetoric against tyranny and for freedom. Ayatollah Khomeini also succeeded in incorporating a set of modern ideas and new cultural idioms that were foreign to traditional Islam into his political discourse, and into the making of *Khomeinism*. Ayatollah Khomeini borrowed his ideas from outside the traditional Islam of the clergy by taking ideas introduced by progressive Muslim and secular intellectuals. As a result, Ayatollah Khomeini's political discourse became radical and made the hegemony of

*Khomeinism* possible. The ideas of lay intellectuals such as Jalal al-Ahmad, whose pamphlet *Gharbzadegi* called for a critical return to Islamic roots, and Ali Shariati, whose attractive modern idioms appealed to the urban middle class, influenced Ayatollah Khomeini's transition from a traditional Ayatollah to one who spoke to a wide section of Iranians. On the eve of the revolution, the young urban middle class, the intellectuals, and the students, considered Ayatollah Khomeini a charismatic leader who would make the revolution to build an egalitarian and just society.[375]

Radicalism as a tendency was dominant in the Iran of the 1960's and 1970's. Under the Shah's reign of terror and in the absence of any peaceful-constitutional channels to reform the regime, the political arena became increasingly radical. It was partly shaped by nationalism and anti-imperialism, and was also influenced by populism driven by demands for social justice. There was also the influence of Third Worldism, the doctrine of popular third-world revolutionary movements in the 1960s. *Khomeinism* as a political ideology reflected all four elements of Iranian radicalism and successfully emerged as the hegemonic ideology within the broad-based revolutionary movement.

The success of *Khomeinism* overshadowed progressive ideas introduced by modern intellectuals. This needs some explanation. *Khomeinism* was a mixture of ideas and a marriage of opposites, as Ayatollah Khomeini and his close circle of clerics hired, if not hijacked, modern and progressive idioms. They utilized political concepts or intellectual expressions introduced by either secular intelligentsia or the progressive Muslim intellectuals, particularly those of Ali Shariati, and incorporated them into a hybrid discourse of Third Worldism, populism, radicalism, and Islamism. Shariati's

---

[375] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 534.

words and idioms were applied outside their original intellectual or political context, creating much confusion among the middle class. As a result, Shariati's discourse failed, due to its partial and improper use within the hegemonic discourse of *Khomeinism*.

Ali Shariati died from a massive heart attack in London, just before the Revolution in June 1977. In his absence, the authentic meaning of his ideas based on a radical 'de-construction' of Islamic thought was lost in the midst of the revolutionary waves when his supporters failed to use his ideas properly, and others abused them. Did Shariati understand the dangers of a revolution under the banner of religion and of keeping the leadership of that revolution out of the hands of religious authorities? Did he consider that an Islamic revolution had the potential of becoming a clerical revolution?[376] These questions remain open for further examination. However, what is clear is that on the eve of the revolution, Shariati's discourse, like other non-clerical discourses, was suffering from institutional weakness and absence of leadership. Since Shariati had opposed the political (autocratic) and religious (conservative) establishments, he was attacked from both sides. Consequently, he did not establish a political party of his own, nor use the traditional institutions controlled by the clergy. Thus, his death led to confusion and misrepresentation of his ideology. The institutional weakness and absence of leadership contributed to the marginalization of Shariati's discourse, and *Khomeinism* as a result won a battle far more complex than a battle of ideas, where the institutional strength and Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership contributed to its success. In the following section we will discuss how Ayatollah Khomeini successfully utilized the traditional institutions to consolidate his leadership during the 1979 Revolution.

---

[376] Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin*, p. 119.

## 4.2. The Traditional Institutions

Rapid modernization by itself did not cause the 1979 Iranian Revolution, but as Skocpol argues, it did cause a "widespread social discontent and disorientation."[377] Revolutions need "collective organizational capacities and the autonomous resources," which give people opportunities in resisting political and economic power holders.[378] The Shah's regime did not survive, as Skocpol suggests, because people made "extraordinary sustained efforts." Given the Shah's wealth and repressive power, the vulnerabilities of the Shah's regime "could well have had little significance." Yet it was the people's collective and organized efforts which made the regime vulnerable.[379] The clergy took advantage of traditional institutional resources, organized the revolutionary masses, and successfully contributed to the making of *Khomeinism*. According to Chehabi and Linz, religious institutions play an important part in the opposition to sultanistic regimes: "To some extent," they observe, "this is due to the weakness of civil society under sultanism, which almost by default confers great importance on those few institutions that maintain a presence in society. Religious organizations and in the end organized religion become a major locus of oppositional activity as they provide support, resources, and leadership."[380]

Under the Shah's regime, contrary to conventional wisdom, the traditional clerical institutions experienced growth and influence. The regime suppressed modern opposition with far more consistency than traditional groups, who benefited from the nationwide

[377] Theda Skocpol, "Rentier state and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution," *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 241
[378] Ibid
[379] Ibid p. 245
[380] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 2: Genesis and Demise of Sultanistic Regimes," in H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 42.

network of mosques, theological seminaries, religious shrines, charitable endowments, and religious lecture halls. The clergy in particular could perform a variety of ceremonial, judicial, and social-welfare functions; they also could publish a number of religious journals. The resources available to the *ulama* were denied to others in the opposition.[381]

The external element also contributed to the consolidation of the clerical institutions. The Cold War and the legacy of the 1953 coup pushed the Shah's regime into even more brutal behaviour towards the left and liberal opposition. The organized left and liberal opposition was closely monitored, while the clerical institutions were not. Given the "the relative sanctuary of the mosque," the Khomeinists succeeded in filling the institutional gap.[382]

The clergy were in a position to maintain their institutional independence due to their traditional economic and political resources. Historically, the institutions of the clergy possessed a significant degree of autonomy from the state. They controlled religious endowment institutions (*awqaf*) in schools, mosques, shrines, and hospitals. They also maintained a direct control over religious taxes such as one-fifth of the agricultural and commercial profits (*khums*), taxes on various categories of wealth (*zakat*), and taxes on voluntary charitable payments (*sadaqe*). The clerical leadership resided in the Shiite shrine cities in Iraq, giving them distance and safety from the Shah's regime.

---

[381] Val. Moghadam, "Populist Revolution and the Islamic state in Iran," in Terry Boswell ed., *Revolution in the World System* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989) p. 153

[382] Ibid; this is not to ignore that the regime made no distinction between the secular, progressive Muslims and Islamists when they formed guerrilla groups and fought against the regime. The point, however, is that the clergy had far more access to the existing traditional institutions than other opposition.

The significant contributions of the organizational network and the moblizational efforts of the clerical establishment to the success of *Khomeinism* are undeniable. It is also undeniable that Ayatollah Khomeini brought about a radical departure from the traditions of the Shiite establishment, challenging clergy's apathy and quietism. But why then did the traditional establishment cooperate with a man whose political discourse broke the long history of quietism and challenged the official policy of the Shiite establishment? Why did the quietist clerical institutions provide Ayatollah Khomeini with organizational resources? Why did they eventually join the revolution? The answer to these questions is twofold. First, the Shah's arrogant sultanistic approach was a long-term strategy to keep the clergy on its side; it eventually turned the clerical establishment into an active opposition. Second, the clerical establishment was disappointed with the regime, and yet it was not a revolutionary institution. It took some time and efforts for the revolutionary Muslims to convince the quietist clergy and encourage their leaders to share the mosque network with the revolution. The traditional institutional resource was almost always available; however it was the revolution itself which turned the organization into an effective resource. It is therefore legitimate to argue that "this resource was an outcome of mobilization, not a prerequisite."[383]

Following the Shah's policy of reform, as discussed earlier, Khomeini launched an open attack on the Shah's White revolution and the Shah's himself. This was accompanied by the 1963 uprising, and made Khomeini a national figure of opposition. The 1963 events also polarized "the clerical class into those who were advocating confrontational political activism and those in favour of quietist, apolitical, and

---

[383] Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, p. 164.

theologically bound pursuits.[384] In response, the Shah "rather than playing the clerics off against one another, lumped them all together and began to boast that with the squelching of the June 1963 uprising he had once and for all defeated the forces of 'medieval black reaction.'"[385] The Shah's modernization policy also undermined the whole clerical establishment. The creation of the Literacy Corps was regarded as a challenge to the traditional role of the clergy in the education system,[386] and the Shah cancelled monthly payments to clerical students. In 1967 the *Majles*, ordered by the Shah, passed the family Protection Law, which undermined the *sharia* law and challenged the social status of the clerical institution.[387] In the mid 1970's the regime closed down some religious institutions and lecture halls: Faiziyeh seminary in Qom, Hedayat mosque and Hosseinieh Ershad in Tehran.[388] The regime dissolved all university-based religious student associations, forbade some religious figures from delivering public lectures, and shut down some religious publishing centres.[389] Moreover, given the Shah regime's "official monarchist political culture," it was "expressing the culture of the pre-Islamic ancient Iran."[390] In February 1975 the Shah changed the official calendar of the country from its base, the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina (*Hejri*), to the start of the *Achaemenian* monarchical reign in what came to be known as the *Shahanshahi* calendar date.

---

[384] Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*," p. 83.
[385] Dariush Zahedi, *The Iranian Revolution, Then and Now: Indicators of Regime Instability* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p. 76.
[386] Shahroukh Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), p. 98.
[387] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 444.
[388] Misagh Parsa, *The Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p. 196.
[389] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 444.
[390] Farsoun, Samih, K. and Mehrdad Mashayekhi., "Iran's Political Culture," in Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi eds. , *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic* (London: Rutledge, 1992), p. 9.

The regime's "blatant abuse against fellow ulama," writes Zahedi, "combined with the harsh climate of state antagonism toward the whole institution of Shiism, included even the normally quiescent senior members of the hierarchy to raise their voice against the system."[391] Khomeini was able to take this opportunity, pushing the religious establishment to join the movement and provide their institutional resources to the revolution. The Shah's regime, despite its harshness, was unable to control the nation's approximately 90,000, clerics or shut down all the mosques and religious institutions.[392] The relative economic and political autonomy of the clerical establishment helped the clergy as an institution survive and serve Khomeini's purpose.

The secular constitutionalists, liberals and socialists alike, were experiencing the contrary institutional decline. The national bourgeoisie suffered from the state's autocratic structural transformation and integration into the world market.[393] In the post-coup era, the secular-constitutionalists lost their organizational power. The Shah's secret police and military apparatus destroyed practically all organized secular political groups such as the liberal National Front and the Marxist *Tudeh* Party. Similarly, the Islamic *Mojahedin* and the Marxist *Fadaian* guerrilla organizations were demolished by the secret police. On the eve of the revolution they held neither a large social base nor enough resources for an effective and viable political organization. *Khomeinism* filled the institutional gap among the opponents of the Shah's regime. In the following section we will discuss the source and role of Khomeini's leadership in the making of *Khomeinism*.

---

[391] [391]Dariush Zahedi, *The Iranian Revolution, Then and Now: Indicators of Regime Instability*, p. 78.
[392] John Foran, *Fragile Resistance, Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), p. 337.
[393] Farsoun, Samih K. and Mehrdad Mashayekhi., "Iran's Political Culture," p. 10

## 4.3. Charismatic Leadership

"In traditional societies," Max Weber wrote, "charisma is the real revolutionary force."[394] For Weber, the test of charisma is the recognition of leader by his followers.[395] This recognition goes beyond the leader's personal character and qualifications. It relies on the social conditions within which charisma is "awakened and tested."[396]

Khomeini's personal character and his religious status were both effective in the making of *Khomeinism*. In a society where religion was playing a significant part in shaping public opinion, Khomeini's religious status contributed to the making of *Khomeinism*. His charisma was partly a product of his religious status. Ayatollah Khomeini was respected as a grand ayatollah, but he remained ineffective in leading socio-political changes. The 1977-1979 revolutionary events, however, turned him into a great and popular leader.

According to Max Weber, when spiritual "disenchantment" takes place in "moments of distress – whether psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, or political," society needs "re-enchantment" or "otherworldly" experiences.[397] As Durkheim observed, in such times the need for re-enchantment, and thus for charismatic leadership, is due to increasing "anomie" or moral/spiritual isolation brought about by the process of rapid modernization.[398] Similarly, Antonio Gramsci suggested that at a "certain point in their historical lives, social classes become detached from their

---

[394] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 245.
[395] Ibid, p. 242
[396] Ibid, p. 249
[397] Ibid, pp. 1111-1112
[398] Kenneth Thompson, ed., *Readings from Emile Durkheim* (Chichester: Ellis Harwood, 1985), p. 129.

traditional parties."[399] At this point "the field is open for violent solutions, for the activities of unknown forces, represented by charismatic 'men of destiny.'"[400] History suggests that such charismatic 'men of destiny' are by-products of a mass society. "The phenomenon of mass society," William Kornhauser observed, "springs from a double crisis: on one level it is a crisis of alienation resulting from the rapid introduction of new cultural symbols for which the population is unprepared; on another it ensues from conditions of institutional fragmentation making 'elites...readily accessible to...non-elites and non-elites...readily available for mobilization by elites.'"[401] The "crisis of mass society" in pre-revolutionary Iran pushed the new middle class to accept and appreciate Khomeini's charismatic leadership. "While not as profound as that which swept Germany during the forties," writes Daniel Brumberg, "Iran's crisis was sufficiently disruptive to impel nearly all urban social groups to mobilize in their quest for charismatic experience and leadership."[402]

Both "structural and symbolic forces," writes Brumberg, set the stage for the successful experience of Khomeini's charisma. The Shah's cultural policy of pre-Islamic nationalism and the uneven relations with the West contributed to the deepening sense of *Gharbzadegi* (infatuation with the West).[403] As Brumberg observes, the Shah had

---

[399] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed., and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 210, quoted from Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 25

[400] According to Daniel Brumberg, "charismatic movements stem from rapid modernization." For the scholars such as Weber, Durkheim, Mannheim, and Shils, he argues, "charisma emerges from a crisis of cultural disorientation and sociopolitical dislocations that systematically (and unintentionally) transforms the consciousness of elites and masses alike." For the scholars such as Mosca, Marx, and Gramsi, in contrast, "masses alienation becomes a social force when elite – by virtue of the cognitive gap that separates them from the masses – manipulates cultural alienation to re-create and /or sustain political order." See Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, pp. 25-26

[401] Ibid, p. 90; Brumberg's argument on mass society quotes from William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (New York: Free Press, 1969), p. 39.

[402] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 90

[403] Ibid, p. 91

undermined all secular institutions and pushed all "urban groups – intellectuals, *bazaaris*, students, and the lower middle class *mostaz'afin* – to seek refuge in mass arenas such as the religious seminaries, universities, mosques, and ultimately the *streets themselves*."[404] Khomeini came armed with the Shiite cultural symbols and clerical institutions to lead the mass movement. A combination of the sudden and mysterious death of Khomeini's son, Mostafa, in October 1977, an insulting article published in *Ettela'at* daily newspaper describing Khomeini as a British agent and a mad-Indian poet, the Jaleh Square demonstration of 9 September 1978, and the death of protesters, all fuelled the revolutionary movement and placed Khomeini in a leadership position at the head of the people.

Social crisis, Max Weber indicated, creates a non-rational need for charismatic experiences and revolutionary change. Ayatollah Khomeini's charisma was both cultural and political in character. His religious authority allowed his followers to transform the nature of a political movement into a test of the religious emotion of the people confronting the Shah's regime. People chanted history witnessing three "idol-breakers": Abraham Khalilollah, Mohammad Rasoullolah, and Khomeini Ruhollah.[405] Ayatollah Khomeini assembled a wide spectrum of social forces behind himself. He was an unusually unorthodox Ayatollah, and a personalization of many syntheses and contradictions. To the people he represented all that was traditional, and to the young idealistic intelligentsia he represented unorthodoxy and resistance. Thus, he reached members of all social classes.

---

[404] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 92.
[405] See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 104.

## 5. Conclusion

The making of *Khomeinism* was an unexpected event in the course of a revolution. The 1979 Revolution surprised theorists of social revolutions and others who never imagined that the Shah's regime would be overthrown. Although *Khomeinism* led an unforeseen revolution, Theda Skocpol observed that it was a "social revolution" that brought a "rapid, basic transformations of a country's state's and class structure and of its dominant ideology."[406]

The dialectical approach discussed in this chapter implies that successful political actors take advantage of structural opportunities. As Richard Snyder observes, they can "shift strategic postures within the margins of manoeuvrability allowed by structural constraints."[407] A successful revolutionary outcome requires complementary factors such as a revolutionary culture, a strong organization, and an effective leadership. In the course of Iran's revolutionary transition, the trilogy of ideas, institutions, and individual (the ideological discourse, the traditional institutions, and the charismatic leadership) effectively contributed to the making of *Khomeinism*.

Ayatollah Khomeini, as Daniel Brumberg observes, "was not the manufacturer of his own charisma. His lifelong immersion in mysticism, combined with an enduring fervor to defend his fellow Shiites against unjust rulers, endowed him with a genuine sense of his own divinity."[408] Nonetheless, "this charismatic sensibility by itself could have no *social* consequences." The "fusion of a profound crisis of social dislocation with this magical sensibility" contributed much to the making of his charisma. Moreover,

---

[406]Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 240.

[407] Richard Snyder, "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives," in H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes*, pp. 59-60

[408] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 96

"beyond the structural conditions that melted the institutional and symbolic walls between elites and masses, Khomeini's charisma intensified the longings of his followers because it articulated a messianic sensibility deeply rooted in Shiite, and possibly Persian, culture."[409]

But the success of *Khomeinism* was not due to its triumph in a battle of ideas. The original ideas of clerical Islam did not attract the modern intelligentsia, white and blue collar workers, or the students. *Khomeinism* succeeded by borrowing ideas and idioms from other revolutionary discourses. While the idea of creating a new and progressive vision of Islam inspired Shariati's followers, "in the long run this notion benefited the clerics most."[410] Bizhan Jazani, Ali Shariati's contemporary Marxist-militant who was executed by the Shah's regime, warned that "reckless exploitation of religion was tantamount to placing one's own head under a sword of Damocles."[411] As Jazani argued, the clergy "could at will wield the sword to decapitate those who disagreed with their reactionary interpretation" of religion.[412] Paradoxically, in the end a progressive and secular interpretation of Islam served a clerical conservative political Islam; it was instrumental in the making of *Khomeinism*.

---

[409] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 96.

[410] Daniel Brumberg suggests that Khomeini "grasped and spoke a language that Shariati and company could never claim as their own. Long before Shariati came to prominence Khomeini had established his credentials as a charismatic mystic who, with a small coterie of devoted students, was following in the footsteps of the holy Prophets, the Imams, and their clerical heirs." See Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 79. Also, in a different context, as Nikki Keddie argues, Seyyed Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the 19th century Muslim reformist, used both a secular and a religious idioms in expressing his views. He used the secular idioms to communicate with the modern intellectuals and the religious idioms to speak to the people and the clergy. See Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jama ad-Din "al-Afghani"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

[411] Bizhan Jazani, "Marksism-e Islami ya Islam-e Marksisti" ["Marxist Islam or Islamic Marxism"], Jahan 34-35 (September-October 1985): 22-7, 36-40; quoted in Ervand Abrahamian, "The Islamic Left: from Radicalism to Liberalism," in Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), p, 272.

[412] Ibid.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## The Victory of the *Velayat-e Faqih*: from Khomeini to *Khomeinism*

### 1. Introduction

Lawless governments, as Lisa Anderson observes, "face the opposition they deserve."[413] Such regimes "sow the seeds of intolerance and disrespect for law and reap the harvest of deviousness, extremism, and illegality."[414] Lawless government in general and "sultanistic regimes," in particular, Yossi Shain and Juan Linz argue, reduce "the possibility of a negotiated settlement for a democratic transfer of power because of the lack of institutional channels for bargaining over transition rules and power sharing."[415] Iran's transition from monarchy took a revolutionary form, because the Shah's sultanistic regime, as discussed before, had overruled any chance for a peaceful transition to democracy. The institutional weakness of the regime, characterized by the fusion of the state and the Shah, together with the absence of pro-regime soft-liners, contributed most to the political hegemony of a revolutionary opposition not committed to democracy. Having failed to establish the rule of law, the Shah's sultanistic regime lacked the very foundation of a modern, let alone a democratic, state as defined by Max Weber.[416] The new revolutionary regime was in many ways a continuation of the past, reincarnating the Shah's arbitrary rule in the form of a clerical absolutism. The legacy of the past, the monarchy's lack of the rule of law, contributed to the establishment of the new non-

---

[413] Lisa Anderson, "Lawless Government and Illegal Opposition: Reflection on the Middle East," 223.
[414] Ibid, p, 228
[415] Yossi Shain and Juan L. Linz, "Provisional governments: revolutionaries and moderates," in Yossi Shain and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.28-29.
[416] Not all modern states are democracies. Totalitarian states such as the Nazi Germany, the Fascist Italy, and the Communist Soviet Union were modern states, thought not democracies.

democratic regime. Yet the past does not entirely determine the present. As Chehabi argues, "the Shah's lack of commitment to democratization alone does not explain the eventual emergence of another non-democratic regime."[417] Why then did Iran's revolutionary transition from sultanism consolidate another non-democratic regime?[418]

In the global first wave of democratization, the modern state preceded democracy, while the "third wave democracies have begun democratization backwards."[419] Democracy came to England and France once the rule of law was established and civil society was relatively strong and autonomous. By contrast, countries in the third wave have faced a "double challenge," of transforming into a democratic state while "completing the construction of a modern state."[420] The extent of the challenge is great when the new regime follows a sultanistic regime extremely weak in the institutionalization of a modern state. The challenge becomes even greater when the leadership, institutions, and ideology of the new regime have a minimal commitment to democracy. Iran's post-sultanistic regime characterizes such a complex and challenging case where *Khomeinism* replaced Sultanism.

According to Chehabi and Linz, "where the charismatic leaders are not democrats" the mass movements they lead will not result in democratic outcomes.[421] But Ayatollah Khomeini's lack of commitment to democracy alone does not explain the non-

---

[417] H E. Chehabi, "The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic republic in Iran," in Yossi Shain and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 131

[418] According to Gillermo O'Donnell, "the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime" exemplifies the emergence of "transition" to a new regime. See Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 6.

[419] Richard Rose and Doh Chull Shin, "Democratization Backwards: The Problem of Third-Wave Democracies," *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 31, part 2, April 2001, 331-345, p. 336.

[420] Ibid

[421] Chehabi and Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 2: Genesis and Demise of Sultanistic Regimes," in H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes*, p. 44

democratic outcome of the revolutionary transition. Democracy results not *merely* from the elites' commitment to democratic values, but from a *need* to make political structures open and accessible to all adversaries.[422] Yet the dominant leadership, the ruling institutions, and the hegemonic *Khomeini* ideology in post-revolutionary Iran discouraged the need for democratization and destroyed adversaries.

To understand Iran's third wave of democratization and explain de-democratization, understanding *Khomeinism* in necessary. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, to contextualize the ideas and politics of Ayatollah Khomeini in modern Iranian history, and introduce the making of *Khomeinism*. Second, to examine how *Khomeinism* contributed to the de-democratization of Iran's third wave, making the politics of the First Regime of the Islamic Republic a regime paradoxically partially totalitarian, authoritarian, and democratic.

## 2. "A Master Synthesizer": Contextualizing the Life of the Ayatollah

Though the politics and personality of Ayatollah Khomeini were central in the making of Iran's new but non-democratic state, his ideology was almost half a century in the making. His thinking evolved over five distinct stages, beginning with political quietism and concluding with political absolutism. While Khomeini's first three stages of political journey – quietism, constitutionalism, and radicalism – did not directly contribute to Iran's wave of "de-democratization," they remain significant in understanding *Khomeinism*. The final two stages of his journey were central in defining the fate of Iran's first *regime*. Khomeini as the *vali-ye faqih,* and as the absolute *vali-ye*

---

[422] H E. Chehabi, "The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic republic in Iran," p. 131

*faqih* contributed most to the de-democratization of the first *regime,* and therefore these two stages will be examined at length.

## *2.1. Khomeini the Quietist (1920's-1940's)*

Ruhollah Khomeini was born on 24 September 1902 into a clerical merchant family; both his grandfather and father were religious scholars. His father, Ayatollah Mustafa, was murdered only five months after the birth of Ruhollah, and his mother died when he was sixteen.[423]

The four year old Ruhollah was too young to participate in the first revolutionary event of modern Iran, the 1905 Constitutional Revolution. Yet later Khomeini clearly showed his sympathy with the *mashrooe-khahan*, the pro-*sharia* groups guided by Ayatollah Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri, rather than the constitutionalists (the *mashrooteh-khahan*). Nouri and his followers argued that man can not make law, only enforce the *sharia,* or Divine Law. For Nouri and his followers, constitutionalism was defined by the implementation of the *sharia* law, and the role of the *Majles* (the parliament) was limited to ratifying the law. Six decades later, Khomeini repeated the same argument in his writings, suggesting that in an Islamic state the work of the parliament and its jurisdiction is restricted to that of the "planning work."[424] The task of

---

[423] The young Rouhollah "showed great piety, seriousness, and determination". It was the general consensus in Khomein – a small town some hundred kilometres to the south-west of Tehran, and Khomeini's birthplace – that "a significant if turbulent career awaited him." See Hamed Algar's interview with Khomeini's elder brother in Qom, December 19, 1979 quoted in Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981) p. 13. Also, according to Khomeini's son, as a young boy Rouhollah's favourite game "was 'the thief and the vizier' (*dozd-o-vazir*) in which a thief is captured by guards and brought to the court of a king who commands his vizier to have the wretched man punished." Whenever Rouhollah joined the game "he was at least the vizier, if not the Shah himself." See Hamed Algar' interview with Ahmad Khomeini, Khomeini's son, quoted in Bager Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah, London* (New York, I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), p. 2

[424]Rouhollah Khomeini, *Velayat-e Faghih* (Tehran: 1357/1979), p.48.

the parliament was defined as providing professional expertise (*kar shenasi*), meaning the formulation of bills instead of legislating new laws.

The young Khomeini's attitude to politics was congruent with the long established apolitical tradition of the clerical institution. Political quietism and social conservatism best represent the dominant tradition of clerical Shiism. In this tradition the clergy remained apolitical and deferred to the monarchy. According to the traditional understanding of the doctrine of the *Imamat*, the leadership of the community rests solely with the Imam. The last Imam gone into hiding is the sole legitimate leader of the community, and it is believed he shall eventually return to establish the rule of Islam. In the meantime, the community of believers ruled by illegitimate authority remain apolitical. The clerics (*ulama*) guide the community in religious matters, and are responsible for the protection of the faith. Political quietism in the Shiite tradition, writes Hamid Enayat, resembles the pragmatic logic of "Sunni realism," meaning that the "supreme value in politics [is]…not justice but security – a state of mind which sets a high premium on the ability to rule and maintain 'law and order' rather than on piety."[425] Nonetheless, because the authority of the Hidden Imam is passed to the clerics (*ulama*), they exclusively understand and interpret the *sharia* law. As Ansari has it, this suggests that "while power might lie with the temporal body, authority would naturally devolve onto the jurists." The Qajar dynasty recognised this authority, but the Pahlavi monarchs

---

[425] Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 11; Also for insightful discussions, see Shahroukh Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1980).

did not; this eventually caused tensions in state-clergy relations under the Pahlavi dynasty.[426]

Ruhollah Khomeini was supervised by his elder brother, Sayed Morteza, and sent to a reputable religious seminary. Khomeini moved to Arak in 1920 and then to Qom to be instructed under the guidance of Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Abd al-Karim Haeri. Ayatollah Haeri was trained by great scholars, most notably Mirza Hassan Shirazi, at the Shiite teaching centres in Iraq. Ayatollah Shirazi rose to prominence during the 1892 Iranian 'Tobacco Movement', and his *fatwa*, or religious decree, triggered a movement against granting the tobacco monopoly to the British Reggie Company. But Haeri, unlike his teacher, was a quietist cleric who argued that to maintain the traditional wall between politics and religion the clergy should not participate in politics. Despite his sympathy with Mirza Hassan Shirazi, the young Khomeini kept his view to himself and, like his immediate teacher, remained loyal to the tradition of political quietism.

Khomeini "attained prominence among the numerous students of Haeri," and achieved the degree of *ejtehad* (the highest degree of clerical education) in 1936.[427] He was thirty three when he became known as the *marja-e taqlid*, meaning the source of emulation. A *marja-e taqlid* stands at the top of the religious hierarchy, whose authority is binding on the people and on the lower ranks of clergy. In Shiism, unlike the Catholic pope or bishops, the *marja-e taqlid* is not chosen by an electoral college, or by any other formal procedure, but by the populace.

---

[426] Ali M. Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and After* (London: Pearson Education, 2003), 225.

[427] Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 14.

Khomeini as the *marja-e taqlid* did not restrict himself to the conventional teachings and habits of the *madraseh* (the seminary). According to Baqer Moin, Ayatollah Khomeini's biographer, Khomeini's "lifelong interest in poetry, and in particular love poetry, flowered during this period."[428] This remained a secret among his closest students and followers. Khomeini introduced new materials and novel methods in his teachings,[429] and his proficiency in the teaching of ethics and philosophy and devotion to mysticism, known in religious teachings as *erfan,* were instrumental in expanding his circle of students and followers.

Khomeini was sensitive about the power structure in the clerical establishment. "One measure of the power and popularity of a religious figure," as Baqer Moin argues,

> is the amount of money he is able to bring to theological establishments. This, in turn, reflects his dual role as a teacher and a religious figure in the outside world to whom devout Muslims send their religious taxes. The more followers a religious figure has in the world beyond the *madraseh*, the more religious taxes he receives and the more he can afford to reward the *talabeh* [student in the clerical seminary] within it. But, by the same token, it is often through the unswerving loyalty of his *talabehs*, that a good teacher acquires a popular following – for it is they who will propagate his name beyond the seminary.[430]

Khomeini was aware that "in clerical politics, factionalism, lobbying and populism are the norms. Teachers and advanced students are the main actors and extras

---

[428] Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: The Life of Ayatollah*, p. 31

[429] Khomeini came with his own method of teaching, broke with the teaching custom, and developed a more authoritative style. "Instead of conducting his lectures as a dialectical argument between teacher and students," recalls one of his students, "he put forward a topic in a decisive manner, first explaining other opinions and then his own before looking for arguments." See Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: The Life of Ayatollah*, p. 37

[430] Ibid, pp. 32-33

who turn a man into a grand ayatollah or destroy him."[431] He established his own circle, which eventually prepared him for his later involvement in politics.

Khomeini remained a quietist cleric so long as Ayatollah Buroujerdi, an important religious authority and a strong advocate of clerical quietism, was alive. Khomeini's main interests were in *erfan* and in politics, and he continued his search for ways of improving the society and human morality. His personal experience prepared him for his political program of making a society reflect as closely as humanly possible the ideals of a morally perfect Islamic entity.

In the late 1930's Khomeini met Mirza Mohammad Ali Shahabadi, a politically active mystic to whom he felt most indebted. Shahabadi, writes Moin, advised "his students to simplify difficult subjects for a wider popular appreciation, something which the Prophet had encouraged when he said: 'Talk to People according to the level of their intelligence.'"[432]

By the 1940's Khomeini became a master synthesiser. In Qom's Feyziyeh Seminary he offered an unconventional curriculum, brought together the study of mysticism (*erfan*), philosophy (*falsafeh*), ethics (*akhlagh*), and Islamic law (*sharia*). Not only was he practising how to combine *erfan* and politics, but insisting on reconciling two opposing schools in clerical thought, *erfan* and *sharia*. Traditionally, the dominant *sharia*-centred or Islamic legal school was in conflict with the teachings and practice of mysticism. And yet the great majority of both the jurisprudents (the legalists pro-*sharia*) and the mystics (pro-*erfan* or Sufis) were politically quietists. "Islamic history," as Baqer Moin argues,

---

[431] Ibid, p. 53
[432] Baqer Moein, *Khomeini: The Life of Ayatollah*, pp. 43-44.

is punctuated with incidents in which jurisprudents, mystics and philosophers have fought one another…jurisprudents value and use revelation, the simplest of the three messages after mysticism and philosophy. However, mysticism in its devotional form is seen to be the most direct path to God, which is why it has been attractive to converts. The militants, however, have found less to value in it. Khomeini was, in a sense, one of the few to have reached the stature of a leading jurisprudent, the highest level of theoretical mysticism and also to have become a highly-regarded teacher of Islamic philosophy. He was unique in being at the same time a leading practitioner of militant Islam.[433]

In his book *Kitab al Asrar* (Book of Journeys) the mystic-philosopher Molla Sadra had discussed the 'four journeys' of purification leading to a state of perfection. Khomeini was fascinated by this notion. He saw this (new) Platonic path of perfection as the path of the Prophet. In drawing upon Molla Sadra's "four journeys," Khomeini discussed this path of perfection in his lectures. The first journey is "from Mankind to God" in which Man leaves "the domain of human limitations" and purges his soul of all earthly desires. The second journey comes "with God in God;" this means Man submerges himself in the oceans of secrets and mysteries to acquaint himself with the beauty of God. The third journey is from God to the People, when Man returns to the people but is no longer separate from God, as he can now see His omnipotent essence. And the fourth journey is from people to people, in which Man has acquired Godly attributes with which he can begin to guide and help others to reach God.[434] In this final stage the prophethood and the perfect man is realised; the perfect man is the *Imam* and he is obliged to establish the *velayat* (guardianship) on earth, guiding the people and establishing an Islamic society.

Khomeini remained a quietist cleric under the reign of Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty. Reza Shah, a modernizing dictator, was impressed by Kemal's

---

[433] Baqer Moein, *Khomeini: The Life of Ayatollah*, pp. 46-47.
[434] Ibid, pp. 49-50

Attaturk secularism in Turkey and launched a series of legal, educational, and judicial reforms in Iran. These reforms restricted the implementation of the rule of the *sharia* and the role of the *ulama*. But the mainstream clerical establishment, writes Moin, remained quietist, relying on the Shiite practice of *taqiyya* or dissimulation which permits people to deny their faith in order to continue its practice."[435] The young Khomeini, although frustrated, was not an exception; he remained silent.

After the death of Ayatollah Haeri in 1936, Ayatollah Buroujerdi became the supreme religious authority in Iran. Disappointed with Reza Shah's anti-clerical policy, the young Khomeini was searching for a religious leader to combat the Pahlavi regime. He then actively participated "in promoting the candidacy of Buroujerdi," who he expected would utilize his position against the regime's policies.[436] He did not succeed, and Buroujerdi like others before him remained a quietist. Khomeini continued being loyal to the dominant apolitical tradition of the Shiite clergy.

In 1941, the Allies replaced Reza Shah due to his pro-German stance with son, Mohamad Reza, as the new Shah. The young Shah welcomed religious activities in order to contain the supporters of the communist Tudeh Party connected the Soviet Union. The clerical establishment welcomed the new regime's policy, as it would strengthen its clerical institutions.

## 2.2. Khomeini the Constitutionalist (1940's-1971)

Khomeini's transition from quietism to constitutionalism was prompted by the fear of secularism undermining the traditional role of the clerics (*ulama*) in society. As a political activist Khomeini's first public statement came in a book published in 1941. The

---

[435] Baqer Moein, *Khomeini: The Life of Ayatollah*, p. 56.

[436] Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 15.

book titled *Kashf al-Asrar* (The Discovery of Secrets) was essentially a detailed, systematic critique of an anti-religious tract, but it also contained passages that were critical of the anti-religious policy of the Pahlavi monarch.[437] In this small polemical book Khomeini attacked secularism, Reza Shah's anti clerical policies, and a group of clergy who had offended the clerical establishment.[438] The book became the first statement of Khomeini's view on both constitutionalism and the Islamic state. "Government," Khomeini argued, "can only be legitimate when it accepts the rule of God, and the rule of God means the implementation of the *sharia*."[439] But Khomeini did not challenge the institution of monarchy and remained a constitutionalist. He sought a supervisory (*nezarat*) role for the clergy (*ulama*). This was in accord with Article 2 of the 1906 Constitution, as suggested by Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri, providing for a clerical committee to supervise laws passed by the *Majles*. Khomeini reaffirmed his allegiance to the monarchy in general and to a good monarch in particular. If on rare occasions the *ulama* criticized the regime, writes Abrahamian, "it was because they opposed specific monarchs, not the 'whole foundation of monarchy.'"[440]

In *Kashf al-Asrar* the form of government was not Khomeini's main concern as long as the *sharia* law was enforced. Khomeini described the legal procedures and the constitutional arrangement in line of his constitutionalist approach to politics. he argued that

---

[437] Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 15.

[438] The book's real target was "the 'renegade' clergymen who in Khomeini's eyes had 'actively collaborated with him'. Indeed, it was a direct response to an attack on the clerical establishment in a pamphlet called *Asrar-e Hezar Saleh* (Secrets of a Thousand Years) written by Hakamizadeh, the editor of *Homayon*." Hakamizadeh and his colleagues including Ahmad Kasravi were strongly disappointed with the religious establishment and its reactionary and passive approach. See Baqer Moein, *Khomeini: The Life of Ayatollah*, pp. 60-61.

[439] Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrar*, (Tehran: Nashr-e Safar, 1941), 291

[440] Khomeini. *Kashf al-Asrar* (Tehran: Nashr-e Safar, 1941), pp. 185-88, 226, quoted in Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, p. 20

if we say that the government (*hokumat*) and guardianship (*velayat*) is today the task of the *fogaha* (religious jurists), we do not mean that the *fagih* (jurist) should be the Shah, the minister, the soldier or even the dustman. Rather, we mean that a *majles* that is ...[run] according to European laws...is not appropriate for a state...whose laws are Holy ....But if this *majles* is made up of believing *mojtahids* [interpreters of the law] who know the divine laws and ...if they elect a righteous sultan who will not deviate from the divine laws ...or if the *majles* is under the supervision of the believing *fogaha*, then this arrangement will not conflict with the law.[441]

Khomeini was clearly absent from politics in the years from 1951-1953, Iran's second wave of democratization, and was unfriendly to the nationalist movement led by Mohammad Mosaddeq in the 1950's. In the late 1940's and early 1950's Iran, like many third world countries, was in the anti-colonial struggle. The clerical establishment during these years mostly remained politically passive. The exception was Ayatollah Seyyed Abolqasem Kashani (1882-1962), who ignored Buroujerdi's quietist tradition and actively participated in the movement of the 1950s. Kashani, like Navab Safavi and his militant group, *Fadaiyan-e Islam*, believed in "political activism, Islamic universalism, anti-colonialism, and populism."[442] Khomeini found these views inspiring but chose to remain loyal to the dominant clerical tradition. Khomeini did not participate in the second wave of democratization (the 1953 movement for nationalism and democracy). His reasons were unwillingness to support Mosaddeq, whose views differed from his views of universal Islam and his loyalty to Ayatollah Buroujerdi.[443]

The clerical establishment did not support Mosaddeq and the movement. Even Kashani and Navab Safavi, the two major clerical figures outside the establishment, soon

---

[441] Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrar* (Tehran: Nashr-e Safar: 1941), p. 185, quoted in Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 58

[442] Khomeini "was a frequent visitor to Kashani's home." He also continued his contact with Navab Safavi. When Navab Safavi was arrested Khomeini asked the authorities not to harm him. See Baqer Moein, *Khomeini: The Life of Ayatollah*, p. 66.

[443] Mosaddeq's "main mistake," Khomeini argued after he succeeded to overthrow the Shah, "was not to have got rid of the Shah when he was strong and the Shah was weak." Khomeini, *Sahifeh-ye Nur*, vol.3, p. 36, quoted in Baqer Moein, *Khomeini: The Life of Ayatollah*, p. 66.

withdrew their support from Mossadeq. Ayatollah Behbahani and Ayatollah Kashani were instrumental in the 1953 coup sponsored by CIA-MI6. Ayatollah Buroujerdi congratulated the Shah when he was brought back to power. The politics of quietism benefited the Shah since the quietist clergy ironically was deeply involved in politics in a conservative way.[444] Although Khomeini was disappointed with the politics of quietism, he remained politically inactive and never publicly criticized Ayatollah Buroujerdi's policies. For Moin, it appears in retrospect that he understood that he had to establish "his credentials as a prominent religious leader before moving on to the political arena in order to both strengthen his standing within the religious establishment and widen his power base in general."[445] Khomeini witnessed how Kashani and Navab Safavi had suffered from their break with the establishment, and he did not want to repeat their mistakes.

Khomeini's real entry into politics came in 1962-63 after the inauguration of Shah's reforms known as the White Revolution. Ayatollah Buroujerdi's death in 1961 opened the space for Khomeini's involvement in politics, and also left the religious institution with no single successor. Given the presence of older ayatollahs, Khomeini was a junior candidate for Buroujerdi's position. He took the opportunity of the moment and published a collection of rulings on matters of religious practice (resaley-e tozihol masael), and with this book he made himself available to be recognized as the marja-e taghlid, meaning a 'source of imitation.' The Shah regime's difficulties with the White

---

[444] From a different angle we could argue the quietist clergy interfered in politics when their interests or the interests of their close allies such as the landlords or the bazaaris were threatened. For example, Ayatollah Buroujerdi in the name of the sanctity of private property in the sharia lodged a strong protest against the bill of land reform in the early 1960s; see Baqer Moein, Khomeini: The Life of Ayatollah, p. 69.

[445] Ibid, p. 68

Revolution gave him the opportunity to emerge as a leading clerical opponent.[446] Khomeini attacked the new electoral law enfranchising women as an un-Islamic law, and the referendum endorsing the White Revolution as an unconstitutional procedure.[447] In response the Shah sent paratroopers to attack Feyziyeh *Madreseh*, the religious seminary where Khomeini taught. The school was ransacked and some students died. This event showed the regime's hostility towards Islam and the clerical establishment, and its willingness to use violence against its opponents.

Through 1963 Khomeini denounced the Shah's regime as being subordinate to US interests in Iran, and tyrannical in nature. In a speech at Qum he warned the Shah not to behave in such a way that the people would rejoice when he should ultimately be forced to leave the country. Two days later he was arrested, leading to popular uprisings in some cities and confrontation with the Shah's US-trained army that resulted in heavy casualties. Khomeini now emerged as the spokesman for people against the Shah's regime. The events of 1963 brought a new period of mass political activity and a new

---

[446] The crisis began when the Democrats came into power in the United States. Having realized the weakness of socio-economic structures in countries like Iran, and fearful of the Soviet Union's intention to influence such countries, President John F. Kennedy forced the Shah and other U.S. allies to reform their regimes. The candidate for the implementation of reform in Iran was Ali Amini; Amini was a controversial politician trusted by the Kennedy administration but distrusted by the opposition and the Shah. Amini knew how difficult it was to implement reform because he was not welcomed either by Mosaddeq's nationalists or by the leftists. The Shah himself was afraid of Amini's strong personality and remained suspicious of his intentions. Moreover, a huge budget deficit, growing inflation, and frozen salaries of state employees were all signs of the regime's economic crisis. Having been brought back to power through a foreign-sponsored coup, the Shah was also suffering from a crisis of legitimacy. Nonetheless, the greater challenge was to satisfy the clerical establishment. Amini met four Grand Ayatollahs in Qum, of them Khomeini was the fourth, and successfully returned to Tehran; he was confident that the religious establishment not oppose the reform. The secular opposition, the nationalists of the Second National Front – the main organization of followers of Mosaddeq – and the leftists, demanded a free election. Amini rejected their demand and the opposition launched a demonstration. The Shah took this opportunity and ordered the army to attack the striking students at the University of Tehran. As planned by the Shah, such attack weakened Amini's position and he was forced to resign.

[447] Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, p. 10

type of opposition leadership. A militant clergy gradually replaced the secular parties and personalities of the post-Mosaddeq period.[448]

The 1963 uprising was contained by the Shah regime, and Khomeini was released from prison. When legal immunity was granted by the Shah to American personnel for offences committed on Iranian territory, Khomeini furiously condemned this policy as humiliating to Muslims in their own country. He was again arrested in 1964, and sent into exile in Turkey and then to Najaf, Iraq's most important Shiite shrine city. While in exile Khomeini "established himself as a major presence in Najaf."[449] Despite his physical absence from Iran, he maintained his influence among some Muslim political organizations. The Islamic Coalition Association and The Islamic Nations Party remained faithful to Khomeini's idea and leadership.

In *Kashf al-Asrar* Khomeini had argued in 1943 that the clergy should provide legal and moral guidance and not become politically involved. In return, the clergy expected respect for the *sharia* and the clerical establishment. Khomeini's view as a constitutionalist remained unchanged until the 1970's despite the events of 1963.

### 2.3. Khomeini the Revolutionary (1971-1979)

In the early 1970s, writes Arjomand, "Khomeini was the first Shiite jurist to open the discussion (*fath-e bab*) of 'Islamic government' in a work of jurisprudence."[450] The theory of Islamic government was a departure point from constitutionalism for *Khomeinism*. Khomeini began to change his position by suggesting the whole institution of monarchy is illegitimate, and that Muslims should be ruled by an Islamic government.

---

[448] Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 17.
[449] Ibid, p. 18
[450] Said Amir Arjomand, "Authority in Shiism and Constitutional Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende, eds., *The Twelver Shia in the Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Brill: Tuta Pallace, 2001), p. 301.

He stated, "the Islamic government is constitutional in the sense that the rulers are bound by a collection of conditions defined by the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet....In this system of government sovereignty originates in God, and law is the word of God." [451] He developed through a series of lectures delivered in Najaf the novel idea that a just, knowledgeable, and faithful *faqih* (jurist), in the absence of the Twelfth Shiite Imam, was obliged to exercise both religious and political power. "The ruler," Khomeini argued "must have two characteristics: knowledge of the law and justice. He must have knowledge of the law because Islamic government is the rule of law and not the arbitrary rule of persons. In this sense only the *faqih* can be the righteous ruler." [452]

The theory of the *velayat-e faqih* was a radical departure from the dominant traditional trends in Shiism. Khomeini's ideas, as discussed earlier, contradicted the Shiite doctrine of *Imamat* which states that the legitimate leadership of the Muslim community belongs to the Prophet and his twelve successors or *Imams*. He proposed the novel idea that "our duty to preserve Islam" by establishing an Islamic government "is one of the most important obligations incumbent upon us; it is more necessary even than prayer and fasting." [453] In his juridical interpretations, Khomeini suggested the task of creating an Islamic government that can be justified on the basis of the "secondary ordinances" (*ahkam-e sanaviye*), where the "primary ordinances" that is the *sharia* laws are silent or not explicit. [454]

Khomeini called for the Shah's power to be limited by the law and the *sharia*. Legislation, he argued, would only be valid when passed by the parliament and approved

---

[451] Khomeini, "Islamic Government," in Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 55.

[452] Ibid

[453] Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 75.

[454] Ibid, p. 124

by the *ulama*. Khomeini then gradually began to change his position. He initially stated "whatever is in [constitutional] accord with the law of Islam we shall accept and whatever is opposed to Islam, even if it is the constitution, we shall oppose."[455] He then increasingly "came to believe that Islam and nationalism were under greater danger from colonialism, and thus shifted his emphasis from the constitution to Islam."[456] He argued that the regime is bent on destroying Islam because only Islam and the *ulama* can prevent the onslaught of colonialism.[457] But then Khomeini eventually rejected constitutionalism and monarchy; he proposed the novel idea of incorporating the state into the clerical institution.

"Shiism," writes Farhi, "has silent features that pose a potential threat to state authority."[458] Despite the tensions between religious authority and political power, the *ulama* have generally cooperated with the rulers and acknowledged their legitimacy. "That is, in practice," continues Farhi, "they have accepted the existence of temporal power and limited their leadership to the religious sphere."[459] Seizing upon the original Shiite doctrine of *Imamat,* and reverting back to the concept of the Shiite Divine state ruled by *Imams,* Khomeini strongly challenged the *ulama*'s dominant political discourse of quietism and called for the *ulama*'s exclusive political rule as the *Imam*'s agents.

Why and how did the constitutionalist Khomeini become a revolutionary? Why did it happen in the 1970's? Ayatollah Khomeini remained in close contact with Iran

---

[455] Huzeh-e Elmiyeh, *Zendeginameh-e Imam Khomeini* [A Biography of Imam Khomeini] (Tehran, n.d.), p. 95

[456] Hossein Bashiriyeh, *State and Revolution in Iran*, pp. 59-60.

[457] Khomeini complained that the Iranians did not control their bazaar, and traders and cultivators were faced with bankruptcy and deprivation. He also blamed the Shah's regime as being the servant of the US and Israel. See Ayatollah Khomeini, *Khomeini va Jonbesh: Majmueh-ye Nameha va Sokhanraniha* (A Collection of Khomeini's Letters and Speeches) (Tehran, 1352), pp. 58-60, 68-9.

[458] Farideh Farhi, *State and Urban-Based Revolutions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), p. 91.

[459] Farideh Farhi, *State and Urban-Based Revolutions*, p. 91.

during his exile years, and was deeply influenced by the waves of new ideas and radical trends in Iran. The turning point for Khomeini came in the 1970's when Khomeini turned radical and declared that "Islam is fundamentally opposed to the whole notion of monarchy [because it is] one of the most shameful…reactionary manifestations."[460]

Ayatollah Khomeini read Al-e Ahmad's (1923-69) pamphlet, *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxification), given his frequent use of the term in the late 1970's,[461] and was in some way influenced by the discourse introduced by Ali Shariati. The term *Gharbzadegi* was first coined by Ahmad Fardid, a secular intellectual inspired by Heideggerian philosophy, and became popular when Jalal Al-e Ahmad, an independent Leftist and ex-member of the *Tudeh* Party, wrote his essay of the same title. *Gharbzadegi* became a popular theme among religious and secular intellectuals; it turned out to be the core element of the Marxist and Islamist political culture. Moreover, waves of radical Islam reached Khomeini via young militant clerics influenced by Iran's People's Mojahedin Organization – a progressive Muslim militant group inside Iran. Since the 1960's, Khomeini's disciples, Morteza Motahari, Mohammad Beheshti, Mohammad Mofateh, and Mohammad-Javad Bahonar, were working in secular organizations. They taught in high schools and theology or philosophy departments in universities. They also participated in secular institutions such as Iran's Teachers Associations. This created an opportunity for the clergy to advance religious training within secular institutions, and more importantly, to acquire new ideas from intellectuals outside the clerical

---

[460] Ruhollah Khomeini, "October 31, 1971, The Incompatibility of Monarchy with Islam," in Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p 202.
[461] Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Learning and power in modern Iran* (London; Chatto & Windus, 1986.), p. 303

establishment. This group of young clergy created a bridge between the clerical establishment and secular institutions. They significantly influenced Khomeini's ideas.

Iranians outside the country also played a part in transforming Khomeini's views. Iranian student associations in Europe and North America, impressed by Shariati's ideas, pushed Khomeini towards radicalism. Among others, Iranian students such as Ebrahim Yazdi, the future minister of foreign affairs in the interim government, Abolhasan Banisadr, the first president of the republic, Sadeq Qotbzadeh, the future head of the national radio and television, established a link between the Muslim student community abroad and Khomeini. While they created a climate for new ideas to reach Khomeini, the relation between Khomeini and the students was not one–sided. In 1971 he sent a message to the Muslim Students Association in secular idioms appreciating the "independence and freedom of Iran," and attacking "the tyrannical regime and the servants of imperialism."[462] By the 1970's, Khomeini was transformed into a populist and revolutionary Ayatollah with an ability to communicate with different groups of people. On November 1973 during the 3rd Arab-Israeli war, Khomeini urged the Iranians to rise against the aggression of the Zionist regime while the Shah was considered a friend of Israel. He attacked the Shah for creating the *Rastakhiz* Party and opposed replacing Iran's Islamic calendar with that of the Achaemenid, known as the *Shahanshahi* calendar. He also condemned the Shah's celebration of the 2,500-year anniversary of the Iranian monarchy, given the painful reality of Iranian society.

---

[462] Ruhollah Khomeini, "July 10, 1971, Message to the Muslim Students in North America," in Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 210.

The socio-political events of the late 1970s pushed Khomeini to become the leader of "the unthinkable revolution."[463] In 1977, Khomeini's elder son, Mostafa, died suddenly in Najaf, most likely assassinated by the Shah's Security Police, SAVAK. Khomeini "bore this blow stoically," as he termed the tragedy "a divine blessing in disguise."[464] The memorial ceremonies for Khomeini's son in Iran became a starting point for renewed uprising by the theological seminaries and members of the Iranian religious society. The Shah's regime took revenge, publishing an insulting article in the daily *Ettela'at* by attacking Khomeini as an agent of foreign powers. In reaction, the people in Qom displayed anger and frustration. This was the first of a series of revolutionary demonstrations that spread across the country.

"Acting under another of its erroneous assumptions," writes Algar, the Shah's regime requested the Iraqi government expel Khomeini "in the hope of depriving him of his base of operations and robbing the Revolution of its leadership."[465] At a meeting of the foreign ministers of Iran and Iraq in New York, a decision was made to deport Khomeini from Iraq. On 24 September 1978 Iraqi troops laid siege to Khomeini's house in Najaf. The news of the siege angered the public. The Iraqi security chief indicated to Khomeini that if he wished to stay in Iraq he must withdraw from politics, and he replied that he was unwilling to remain quiet or compromise with the Shah. Khomeini went to France, which proved beneficial as communication with Iran was easier from France because Khomeini's declarations were telephoned directly to Iran. His popular speech was articulated in the popular idioms, and therefore united Iran's urban middle class and lower class under his charismatic leadership.

---

[463] Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).
[464] Hamed Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 19.
[465] Ibid, p. 20

The Shah was ultimately forced to leave Iran for the last time on January 16, 1979 and within two weeks Khomeini returned to Iran. On February 1 Khomeini received a tumultuous welcome in Tehran. Within ten days the old regime collapsed, and Khomeini established a new regime called the Islamic Republic of Iran. Khomeini the revolutionary would become Khomeini the *vali-ye faqih*.

## 2.4 Khomeini the Vali-ye Faqih (1979-1987)

In the absence of a common enemy, social and political differences in the aftermath of the revolution became more visible. There was division among the Islamists (from traditional Muslims to populist-revolutionary Muslims and leftist Muslims), nationalists of secular thinking, and various groups on the secular left. Each group held different opinions on the future of post-revolutionary politics. For Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, the future could only be an Islamic Republic, but its nature remained undefined.

Khomeini wanted to place the theory of *velayat-e faqih* as the leading idea of the revolution, merging clericalism and republicanism. Hence, both concepts were redefined. First, the Shiite "jurist law" was "transformed into the law of the state."[466] In his theory of *velayat-e faqih*, Khomeini redefined the role of clergy, suggesting that "in Islam there is no distinction between temporal and religious power. He rejected the prevalent notion that the jurists' task should be limited to understanding and interpreting the *sharia*. They are not mere collectors of traditions; rather it is also part of their duty to implement the

---

[466] Said Amir Arjomand, "Authority in Shiism and Constitutional Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran", p. 302.

law."[467] In fact, the role of the *Imam*, he suggested, "should be represented by a *faqih*, as the sole holder of legitimate authority."[468] In other words, Khomeini's definition of politics was an individual's conformity to the *sharia*. For Khomeini, the structure of authority was divine and the state was instrumental in the implementation of the *sharia*. Second, Khomeini also redefined the concept of republicanism in accordance with clerical rule. The people's participation in politics, or republicanism, resembled for Khomeini the traditional Islamic concept of *bay'a*, meaning the vote of allegiance to authority. The *vali-ye faqih* derives his legitimacy not from people but God. It took several months to establish the rule of the *vali-ye faqih*, to institutionalize *Khomeinism*, and to incorporate the theory of the *velayat-e faqih* into the state institutions.

Following the revolution, Khomeini either appointed or allowed some non-clerical progressive Muslims to run the government. In February of 1979 Khomeini appointed Mehdi Bazargan, a liberal Muslim whose democratic credentials were widely accepted, to form an interim government. The reasons he did this reflected in part the circumstances. First, Khomeini was aware of the diverse forces participating in the revolution; he had said the clerics would not run the government. In Paris Khomeini said "the *ulama* themselves will not hold power in the government," but instead "exercise supervision over those who govern and give them guidance."[469] In February 1979 Khomeini made himself at home in Qom, not in Tehran. Second, there was no unity among the clerics. Third, writes Arjomand, "Khomeini was not setting up government in

---

[467] Ayatollah, Khomeini, *Velayat-e Faqih, Hokomat-e Islami* [The Rule of the Jurisprudent, Islamic Government] (Tehran: 1357), pp. 28,39-40,77-9 quoted in Hossein Bashiriyeh, *State and Revolution in Iran*, pp. 62-3.
[468] Ibid

[469] Asghar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic*, John O'Kane, trans. (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997) p. 24

a vacuum but was taking over an existing one which had undergone considerable modernization in the course of the twentieth century."[470] To incorporate the theory of the *velayat-e faqih* into state institutions required time and experience. In appointing Bazargan to head the interim government Khomeini was seeking time and experience for the clergy to eventually lead the new regime and consolidate *Khomeinism*.

By October 1978 Khomeini convinced Bazargan the he "wanted everything except for the clergy to end up governing the country. Had he felt otherwise, I would not have accepted the post of prime minister."[471] Bazargan reluctantly accepted Khomeini's offer, hoping that "by accepting the position of prime minister he would be able to influence the new regime from within."[472] The interim government was to help the transition to a new regime elected by the people. As Chehabi argues, "the choice seemed to augur well for a transition to democracy. But by the end of 1979, Iran had a quasi-theocratic constitution, and by the summer of 1981, radical Islamists had gained a monopoly of power, eliminating all other political parties."[473] The reverse wave was in the making.

There were many factors contributing to the failed transition to democracy in that episode. First, the Khomeinists rode Khomeini's revolutionary charisma and enjoyed the support of the clergy's institutional strength. Second, the republican forces, Bazargan's government included, suffered from institutional weaknesses, a leadership vacuum, and an elitist ideology unable to compete with the populism of Khomeini's ideas. Third, the

---

[470] Said Amir Arjomand, "Authority in Shiism and Constitutional Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran", p. 302.

[471] Interview with Oriana Fallaci, *The New York Times Magazine*, October 28, 1979, p. 64.

[472] H E. Chehabi, "The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic republic in Iran," in Yossi Shain and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 135

[473] H E. Chehabi, "The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic republic in Iran," p. 127

deepening revolutionary atmosphere brought about by taking American diplomats as hostages, the elimination of intellectuals from universities, and the end of the eight-year Iraq-Iran war contributed in consolidating *Khomeinism*.

### 2.4.1: Referendum and the Constitution of the Republic

The transition from monarchy to Islamic Republic was institutionalized after the March 30-31 referendum in which 98.2 percent of Iranians voted to abolish the monarchy and showed their support for the Islamic Republic. However, the referendum was rigged since the people were only given the choice to vote: for or against the Islamic Republic. The options of a "democratic republic" or even an "Islamic democratic republic" were overruled by Khomeini. Given the revolutionary transition from monarchy, a vote against the Islamic Republic would have been interpreted as a vote for monarchy. The referendum, Ansari argues, "was more a vote against the monarchy than for any specific system of government."[474] Furthermore, Khomeini explicitly urged the public to cast their vote for the Islamic Republic: "I am going to vote for an Islamic Republic, and I expect the people to do the same."[475] Khomeini's public statement significantly influenced the result. But since the nature and meaning of the Islamic Republic was not clearly defined, different groups of people voted for different versions of the Islamic Republic.

The debate over the Constitution of the Islamic Republic was revealing. The first draft of the constitution, prepared by the liberal Muslims and published on June 14, 1979, was modelled on the 1958 Constitution of France's Fifth Republic. It proposed an elected president and parliament based on universal suffrage without reference to religious rule.

---

[474] Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and After*, p.221
[475] Khomeini, *Sahifeye Nour*, 16 vols.,vol. 5(Tehran: 1361/1982), p. 119

The preliminary draft of the constitution devised a separation of powers among the three branches of government, the president elected directly by the people, and prime minister elected by the members of the parliament. As Ansari argues, "religion was central, insofar that Twelver Shiism was enshrined as the state religion and all laws had to be checked for compatibility with the *sharia*. But ensuring compatibility with the Islamic law was not the same as making *sharia* the basis of the law."[476] But instead of the *velayat-e faqih*, the Guardian Council consisting of six clerical and six non-clerical lawyers was to examine the compatibility of preliminary legislation with the *sharia*. While the draft was initially approved by Khomeini, he was alarmed by disagreements and changed his position, urging "his clerical followers not to leave the task of constitution-making to secular intellectuals."[477] The proposal for a secular Constituent Assembly was replaced by establishing an Assembly of Experts consisting of 73 members, of which 55 were clerics. The Assembly of Experts adopted Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* despite some opposition, and vested supreme authority in the *vali-ye faqih*. The new constitution institutionalized the office of the *velayat-e faqih* and made Khomeini the *vali-ye faqih*. As Arjomand observes, "the new draft was no longer a republican constitution consistent with Shiite Islam, but a constitution that purported to be fundamentally Islamic and to incorporate specifically Shiite principles of Islam."[478] The new draft systematically redefined the republican principles of the original draft in accordance with the theory of the *velayat-e faqih*. The Constitution was no longer "the higher law" of the country, since Article 4 offered the jurists of the Guardian Council

---

[476] Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and After*, p. 222.
[477] Arjomand, "Authority in Shiism and Constitutional Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran," p. 304.
[478] Arjomand, "Authority in Shiism and Constitutional Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran,"p.305

appointed by the *vali-ye faqih* a veto power over all *Majles* legislation "to suspend not only ordinary laws but also the Constitution itself by declaring it contrary to Islam." In addition several Articles, including those pertaining to the bill of rights "were restricted by the requirements of conformity to 'Islamic standards.'"[479] Khomeini was satisfied even as Bazargan and his liberal Muslim colleagues and others became deeply disappointed.

The adoption of Khomeini's theory of the *velayat-e faqih* in making the constitution was a turning point in the reverse wave. While Khomeini's position as the leader of the revolution was accepted by almost all secular and religious forces, his constitutional position as the *vali-ye faqih* became a matter of intense debate and disagreement. The republican forces feared the rise of authoritarianism, and launched political campaigns against the new draft. Khomeinist forces counter-attacked, and Khomeini made it clear he would not tolerate political campaigns against the *velayat-e faqih*: "We thought," Khomeini proclaimed, "we were dealing with human beings. It is evident that we are not. We are dealing with wild animals."[480] With the constitution proposing a *vali-ye faqih*, Khomeini responded harshly: "The *velayat-e faqih* (Theocracy) is something that God, the exalted...has ordained....Wake up, you gentlemen...because the deviationists are...trying to...smash our movement....[they]...speak out [against] the concept of the *velayat-e faqih* (theocracy)....I shall strike you in the mouth. Stop this talk....Enough is enough: what ought to be done must be done."[481]

---

[479] Ibid, pp. 306-307

[480] Khomeini, *Sahifeye Nour*, 16 vols., vol. 8(Tehran: 1361/1982), p. 245.

[481] "Khomeini Defends Concept of Theocracy in 22 October Speech," broadcast 22 October 1979, FBIS-MEA-79-206, vol. 5, no. 206, quoted in Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 105

"Yet the results," as Brumberg put it, "were far from the theocracy that Khomeini had zealously proclaimed. Instead of producing a coherent constitutional map, the clerics blended several different ones, thus institutionalizing a new political order based on contending visions of authority," ranging from "orthodox" to "populist revolutionary" to "democratic" visions.[482] Khomeini's traditional and charismatic authorities were institutionalized in the constitution. The office of the *velayat-e faqih* and Khomeini as the *vali-ye faqih* brought together traditional, charismatic and legal authorities in the making of the Islamic Republic. This was a "dissonant institutionalization,"[483] which caused many contradictions in the state of *Khomeinism*, and much tension in the Khomeinist state.

The draft Constitution was approved by the public on 14 November 1979. On this day Bazargan was no longer in office and had resigned earlier on 4 November 1979: the day when American Embassy was seized, Bazargan resigned to express his anger and opposition to the Khomeinist hostage takers.

### 2.4.2: The American Hostage Crisis

The referendum and the ratification of the constitution were two significant steps toward the consolidation of *Khomeinism*. The third step, however, was of a different nature. The tensions over adopting the office of the *velayat-e faqih* pushed the Khomeinists to find an exit path. "Anxieties over impending anarchy at both levels," writes Ansari, "encouraged the view that a distinct 'third party' had to be found, if

---

[482] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 105

[483] According to Brumberg, "dissonant institutionalization" is "a process by which contending visions of authority are embedded *within* a diverse array of official and semioffical arenas. These domains include, but are not limited to, competing ideological factions within the state, formal constitutions or other written documents, and the everyday political rhetoric of leaders." See Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 100.

necessary invented, to focus the attentions of competing factions."[484] On 4 November 1979, a group of Muslim radical students, followers of the Line of the *Imam (Khat-e Imam)*, offered Khomeini this opportunity. The seizure of the American Embassy placed the U.S. as a 'third party', easing all factional tensions and turning all attention into a greater issue of fighting against the United States. Khomeinist*s* were quick to manipulate this event by changing the political agenda from the struggle for democracy to the fight against imperialism. The takeover of the American embassy provided Khomeinist*s* with an opportunity to redefine the revolution and reformulate the republic in accordance with Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* and his anti-imperialist rhetoric.

The seizure of the American Embassy contributed to the reverse wave of democratization. Khomeini called this a "Second Revolution" and more important than the first one which overthrew the Shah's regime. "The Americans," Khomeini expressed, "can't do a damn thing." Khomeini's Second Revolution was to fight the U.S. and its liberal allies[485] by excluding secular and liberal groups such as the Mosaddeqist National Front and Bazargan's Freedom Movement of Iran from the political mainstream. It brought down the Bazargan government, put an end to the era of transition, and opened the way for the ratification of a redrafted constitution and the institutionalization of the office of the *velayat-e faqih*.

The hostage crisis was instrumental in consolidating the power of Khomeinist*s* in a number of ways: it forced the opponent of the *velayat-e faqih* into a defensive position

---

[484] Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and After*, p. 226.

[485] The radical Khomeinist forces took over the American Embassy at the time when Bazargan and his foreign minister, Ibrahim Yazdi, were in a meeting with Zbigniew Brezinski, the U.S. national security advisor, in Algeria. This meeting was coincident with the time when the Shah was admitted to the U.S. for treatment of his illness, which triggered anger and disappointment among the public, fearing the return of the Shah as it had happened in 1953. The Khomeinist forces were quick to turn this self-claimed threat into an opportunity, excluding their domestic rivals as agents of American imperialism.

by providing the best opportunity to propose a referendum for the highly controversial draft of the constitution and establishing the *velayat-e faqih*. The hostage crisis helped Khomeinists to dominate the political climate with anti-imperialist rhetoric, isolating Khomeinists' radical-leftist rivals. Khomeini was now "able to defuse the guerrilla movements temporarily by manipulating the hostage crisis,"[486] and "was also easily able to distract the attention of the leftist guerrilla organizations who were still enthusiastic in their belief that priority was to support Khomeini's anti-imperialist stand."[487] The hostage crisis confused the leftists as they failed to grasp the connection between the hostage crisis and the power struggle in the first government of the Islamic Republic. The hostage crisis also helped Khomeinists to attack groups and individuals against the *velayat-e faqih* by associating them with the United States. The takeover of the Embassy also pushed liberals out of the government, opening up the space for clerics to run the new established institutions. The Second Revolution and the hostage crisis provided the opportunity for Khomeinist forces to purge opposition intellectuals by launching the so-called Cultural Revolution in the summer 1980, to purify all university curricula and to remove university professors and students not committed to the rule of the *vali-ye faqih*.

### 2.4.3: The Fall and Failure of Bazargan's Liberal Government

The failure of Bazargan's interim government was both the cause and consequence of the reverse wave of democratization. The government's failure to re-establish the new order, unconsciously and indirectly, caused its fall. The assassinations of some revolutionary officials and the fear of potential anarchy had worried Khomeinists, pushing them towards more intervention. Bazargan was a devoted Muslim democrat

---

[486] Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 226.
[487] Ibid, p. 227

whose liberal views and legalistic approach were not appreciated in the midst of the revolutionary waves. He himself was well aware of a sharp difference between his gradualist approach and Iran's revolutionary climate: "don't expect me," Bazargan expressed, "to act in the manner of [Khomeini] who...moves like a bulldozer, crushing rocks, roots, and stones in his path. I am a delicate passenger car and must ride on paved and smooth roads."[488] He turned out to be the right man in the wrong time. Furthermore, Bazargan underestimated Khomeini's political skills and Khomeinists' organizational strengths. The institutional weakness of the secular and Muslim liberal democrats, Bazargan and his colleagues included, contributed to the failure of the transition. Bazargan himself made this explicit: "If we in the [Liberation Movement of Iran] – namely we who believe in God and Islam but not in the clergy – had been alert; if, instead of being distracted, we could have behaved like a party, then this mess wouldn't have occurred. Yes, we could have prevented it."[489] The institutional weakness of the liberal democrats, as Chehabi observes, "was due partly to the moderates' somewhat elitist conception of politics, which was a legacy of Mosaddeq's heyday in which only the middle class had been politically mobilized, and partly to long years of royal dictatorship, during which all opposition party activity had been severely repressed."[490]

The fall of the interim government was also a consequence of the reverse wave for the following three reasons: First, the hegemony of radical discourse, opposing liberalism, bourgeois nationalism and American imperialism was certainly antithetical to

---

[488] Abdol-Ali Bazargan, ed., *Masael va moshkelat-e nakhostin sal-e enghelab az zaban-e ra'is-e dowlat-e movaqqat* [The Problems of the revolution's First Year, as Told by the Head of the Provisional Government] (Tehran: Nehzat-e Azadi, 1983) p. 75, quoted in H. E. Chehabi, "The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic Republic in Iran," p. 132.

[489] *The New York Times Magazine*, October 28, 1979, p.65; quoted in H. E. Chehabi, "The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic Republic in Iran," p. 138.

[490] H E. Chehabi, "The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic republic in Iran," p. 137

the mode and manner of the Bazargan government. The revolutionary discourse advocated by many Islamists, ranging from Khomeinists to the leftist-Muslims of the People's *Mojahedin* Organization, and the secular-leftists such as the Marxist *Tudeh* Party.[491] Second, the extremist politics of the People's *Fadaiyan* Organization in Kurdistan (Gonabad, Turkaman areas) and in the universities and factories - the council (*showra*) movement organized by the extremist left – contributed to the weakening of Bazargan and strengthening of the Khomeinists.[492] Second, Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary charisma contributed to the failure of democratic transition. Khomeini, referring to Bazargan and others, made it explicit that "we hate freedom without the Koran....We hate their saying: Islam without the clergy."[493] Bazargan and his colleagues, as Chehabi argues, "tried to bridge the societal gap, but Khomeini's charismatic hold on the people, and the energies set free by the revolution overwhelmed them."[494] Third, Khomeinists' institutional strengths contributed to their success. In addition to the pre-existing traditional religious institutions, the new established revolutionary organizations played a significant role in consolidating the new authoritarian regime. The clerical interference was mostly organized by a newly established Islamic Republican Party. It was created by five disciples of Khomeini – Mohammad-Hossein Beheshti, Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Ali Khamenei, Mohammad-Javad Bahonar, and Abdolkarim

---

[491] The Marxist *Tudeh* Party, as Mohsen Milani observes, "denounced Amnesty International's call to halt the summary executions, calling it blatant interference in Iranian affairs. When Bazargan insisted that forgiveness, not revenge, is Islam's true legacy, the *Tudeh* responded that 'real Islam' is based on *qesas* (retribution), as if it were an expert on Islam." *Mardom*, Ordibehest 14, 1358/May 6, 1979, quoted in Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: from Monarchy to Islamic Republic* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994) p. 153.

[492] See Saeed Rahnema, "Work Councils in Iran: The Illusion of Worker Control," *Economic and Industrial Democracy* (SAGE, London, Newbury Park and New Delhi), Vol. 13 (1992), 69-94.

[493] "Khomeini Delivers Speech on freedom, Plots," broadcast 25 May 1979, FBIS-MEA-79-103, 29 May 1979; quoted in Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 103.

[494] H. E. Chehabi, "The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic republic in Iran, p. 142.

Mosavi-Ardebili. The Islamic Republican Party, until its dissolution in 1987, served Khomeinists to consolidate their power and dismantle the power base of the secular Muslim liberals and progressive forces. Moreover, having established a powerful Revolutionary Council and other revolutionary organizations, Ayatollah Khomeini created a parallel government. The revolutionary institutions had subordinated Bazargan's government to Khomeinists' directives, creating disorder which was then blamed on the Bazargan government.

### 2.4.4: The First President of the Republic

The fall of Bazargan's government in winter 1979 was a boost for Khomeinists; yet *Khomeinism* was fully institutionalized only after the summer of 1981 when Khomeini as the *vali-ye faqih* dismissed the first President of the first government of the Islamic Republic, Abolhasan Banisadr. The interval was a period of uncertainty, of pull and push for democratization and de-democratization.

The Constitution formally recognized the authority of the president and of the parliament in the Islamic Republic. In practice, however, the legislature and executive powers became subordinated to the power of the *vali-ye faqih*. The Constitution secured the rule of the *vali-ye faqih* and reformulated the Republic to become a popular theocracy. The first presidential and parliamentary elections were held in January and March 1980 after the constitution was ratified by the people.

Khomeini banned the clergy from running for the office of the presidency due to the strong opposition to the *velayat-e faqih*. The new draft of the Constitution vested only a limited power in the president and Khomeini was willing to allow another trusted liberal Muslim to run for the office of the presidency. Abolhasan Banisadr, a lay religious

intellectual, was the first president-elect of the Islamic Republic. The case, however, was different with the first parliament: the Islamic Republican Party and other clerics, in spite of the presence of Bazargan and some other liberal MPs, dominated the first *Majles* of the Republic. Bazargan's Liberation Movement of Iran and other liberal and secular parties failed to pay "attention to grass roots organization." They failed to propose candidates for "the majority of the constituencies," which resulted in the victory of Khomeinists.[495]

The powerful Islamic Republican Party elected a majority of members in the first parliament and provided the radical Prime Minister Rajaee with institutional support. The conflict between the liberal president, on the one hand, and the radical prime minister, Mohammad-Ali Rajaee, and the first *Majles* revealed the intrinsic contradictions of the Constitution of the First Government of the Republic. Given his extra-constitutional position, Khomeini intervened, providing an exit path to save the Republic. He sided with fellow radical Muslims and attacked the liberals. For some time Iraq's invasion of Iran in September 1980 had "temporarily saved Banisadr from Khomeini's wrath."[496] But Khomeini was determined to consolidate the rule of the *vali-ye faqih*. The President was first dismissed as Commander in Chief and then was removed from the office of the presidency. The process was constitutionally initiated by Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, the Chief Justice and powerful leader of the Islamic Republican Party. This was followed by the *Majles* declaring the President "politically impotent." Given his constitutional authority specified in Article 110, Khomeini dismissed the first president of the Islamic Republic in June 1981.

---

[495] Some secular candidates such as Madani and Sanjabi of the National Front were prevented from taking their seats.
[496] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 116.

The events of summer 1981 marked a turning point in the history of Iran's third wave of democratization. The short "spring of freedom," as it was called by Iranians, was replaced by a long season of fear and frustration. A short but bloody semi-civil war broke out, and the Khomeinist*s* lost a number of key figures: Ayatollah Mohammad-Hossein Beseshti, the Chief Justice and the leader of the Islamic Republican Party, and some seventy radical MPs and officials were killed in the bombing of the Islamic Republican Party headquarters. In August 1981 the former Prime Minister and new President, Mohammad-Ali Rajaee, and his Prime Minister, Mohammad-Javad Bahonar, were killed in a massive explosion. The violence and bombings were used as a pretext to wage an all-out war against the Regime's opposition. The semi-civil war brutalised the whole society in general and the political society in particular. The regime shut down all political parties, and arrested executed or jailed party leaders and party members. According to Abrahamian, the figures for the execution of the opposition were 600 by September, 1700 by October, and 2500 by December 1981.[497] The reign of terror did not even tolerate the moderate, non-partisan parties loyal to the political establishment: the Marxist *Tudeh* Party was banned and party leaders imprisoned.[498] Similarly, Bazargan's Iranian

---

[497] Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin* (I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1989), p. 220. Also, for an informative and insightful account of the reign of terror in Iran, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1999).

[498] The Marxist *Tudeh* Party, as Mohsen Milani observes, followed the Soviet Union policy towards Iran and supported the Islamic Republic based on "opportunistic calculation," assuming that with the elimination of the liberals and the lack of managerial skills on the part of the Khomeinists, they would be invited to share power. The *Tudeh* party supported Khomeini's anti imperialist struggle, voted for the Islamic Republic and its Constitution, and condemned President Banisadr and the Mojahedin Khalq Organization. The Khomeinists "were quite aware of the *Tudeh*'s insincerity. But they had tolerated the *Tudeh* Party because it weakened their opponents, kept the left divided, and improved their relations with Moscow." In the summer of 1981the regime demolished the *Tudeh* party because the *Tudeh* party, following Soviet policy, called for an end of the Iran-Iraq war and to accept the Soviet peace plan. It is reported that the British government had provided the regime with "some critical information on the *Tudeh* party's plan and the names of some 400 *Tudeh* officials." Also, "the conservative forces in the Islamic

Liberation Movement was forced into isolation. In the winter of 1981 the Khomeinists

consolidated their power by eliminating and excluding all their rivals. As Moin observes,

"Khomeini's personal role in the gradual transformation of the clergy into a 'clerical

regency' – as Bazargan using the French term, called the new theocracy – was

significant."[499] Khomeini as the *vali-ye faqih* wanted the clergy in the office of the

president: The first clerical president and the Islamic Republic's third president was Ali

Khamenei, then Secretary General of the Islamic Republican Party and the future

successor of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Why did the republican forces fail for the second time after the revolution? Like

Bazargan's, Banisadr's fall was also the cause and consequence of the reverse wave of

democratization. Given the institutional strength of the Khomeinists, the main weakness

with Banisadr was his failure to create his own political party. Banisadr "failed both to

institutionalize his support and to define clearly the core of his constituency." Banisadr,

Milani observes, was

> becoming a man for all seasons. To enlarge his popular base of support
> among the nationalists, he championed the cause of civil liberty and economic
> reconstruction. To win the support of the leftists, he favoured nationalization of
> major industries and greater autonomy for minorities. At various times, he aligned
> himself with the orthodox *ulama* and with some members of Khomeini's
> household. In hard times, however, Banisadr was unprepared to defend any of
> these groups or jeopardise his relations with Khomeini, whom he admired.[500]

During the first few months of his presidency Banisadr was instrumental in

implementing Khomeini's Cultural Revolution: the intellectual purge of professors and

---

Republic were pressing the government to dismantle the *Tudeh*." See Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: from Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, pp. 190-193.

[499] Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 247; The term was used by Mehdi Bazargan in Mehdi Bazargan , *Engelab-e Iran dar Dow Harekat*, (Tehran: n.d.) p. 202.

[500] Banisadr did not support the National Front's rally against the *Qesas* legislation (the Sharia-based retribution law) in June 1981. See Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution*, p.185.

students who maintained sympathy with the opposition parties. Banisadr consequently weakened his potential future allies in the confrontation he later had with the Khomeinists. The opposition never forgot Banisadr's position during the Cultural Revolution, and in the last few months of Banisadr's presidency the People's Mojahedin Organization, a radical leftist-Muslim militant group, made an informal alliance with the president against the Khomeinists. This alliance, however, served neither the democratization process, nor Banisadr's presidency. Given the scepticism about the Mojahedin, the alliance proved to be "suicidal." The liberals and nationalists viewed the Mojahedin as radical Muslims opposed to democracy; and Khomeinists considered the Mojahedin to be *monafeqin* (hypocrites), believing in an Islamic-Marxist ideology and pursuing a hidden political agenda. Finally, President Banisadr and the militant Mojahedin overestimated their popularity and underestimated the power of the Khomeinists.

### *2.4.5: War and the Republic*

The domestic situation within Iran and the international fall-out from the hostage crisis encouraged Saddam Hussein of Iraq to invade Iran in September 1980. Having considered that Arab monarchies and the West had serious concerns about the export of the Iranian Revolution, Saddam was quick to make this threat an opportunity. In the 1975 Algiers Accords, Iraq had been forced to grant the sovereignty of the *Shatt al-Arab* (Arvandan) waterway to Iran under the Shah's regime. Hence, Iraq's invasion aimed at restoring its sovereignty by occupying Iran's south-western oil-rich province of Khozestan and dictating Iraqi conditions to Iran. Saddam Hossein's principal objective, however, was much more than the territorial gains. The American Cold War policy in the

Persian Gulf was built on "two-pillars": Iran and Saudi Arabia. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, one pillar collapsed; Saddam Hossein sought to establish Iraq as the substitute pillar. He also desired to emerge as a great champion of Pan-Arabism.[501] For Saddam Hossein, a quick victory over Iran would serve his goal.

Saddam's goal, in spite of a quick victory in the first few weeks, was not achieved. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard used the human waves of the *Basiji* militia to change the military situation. By 1982 Iran recaptured Khoramshahr, the most significant town occupied by the Iraqis, and pushed the Iraqi troops behind their borders.[502] Iran then decided to take the war to victory by removing Saddam from power. But ultimately neither side gained victory: Saddam failed to change the 1975 Algiers Accords, and Khomeini failed to remove Saddam from power.

"War," Charles Tilly argues, "makes states."[503] By the same token, the Iran-Iraq war contributed to the consolidation of the Khomeinist state. Iranian nationalism strengthened by the war and the mobilization of the masses became factors in the institutionalization of the Khomeinist*s* in the first government of the Islamic Republic. The war ironically provided Khomeini with an historic opportunity to consolidate his vision of the revolution.

In the short run, the political impact of the war was conducive to the consolidation of the regime's autocratic rule. The prosecution of the war after the restoration of Khoramsharhr was certainly an advantage for the regime and a disadvantage for the

---

[501] There was a mutual interest between Iraq and the United States against Iran. Given the existence of the US sophisticated satellites, the Americans were informed about Iraq's intention to invade Iran. Similarly, for the Arab regimes in the Persian Gulf, the threat of revolutionary Iran was much more serious than the hegemony of Saddam Hussein as a champion of Pan-Arabism.

[502] For the Iranian society, this victory "engendered a sense of euphoric empowerment second only to the departure of the Shah." See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921*, p. 235.

[503] Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in P.B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 170.

regime's political opponents. In the long run, however, the social impact of the war laid the foundations for the transformation of the people from subjects into citizens. The unintended consequences of the eight-year war, the longest war in the twentieth century,[504] were to change the state-society relationships and contribute to the re-enchantment of the Iranian society. "If Iranians had entered the war as obedient subjects, they emerged from it with a keener sense of their own relationship to the state."[505]

Ayatollah Khomeini, pressed by both domestic and international factors, was forced to ignore all the talk of victory and accept the UN cease-fire under the UNSCR 598. The massive use of chemical weapons on the military front, the series of defeats on the battle fronts, and the extension of war into the cities all contributed to the demobilization of the masses. The *Basiji* militia was unable to provide the regime with human waves on battle fronts. Iran's status as rentier state came under intense economic pressure with the global decline of oil prices. International pressure also pushed Ayatollah Khomeini to accept the cease fire. The West was determined to maintain a balance of power in the region, as explained by Mohsen Milani: "The objective of Washington during the Iraq-Iran war was to watch the 'mutual destruction' of the belligerents, as the British did when Germany fought the Soviet Union in World War II, without permitting either of them to emerge triumphant or, as Kissinger said, to assure that there would be two losers in one war."[506] The West provided Iraq with satellite information of Iran's military moves and plans. They supported Iraq's chemical weapon

---

[504] Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict* (New York: Routlege Chapman and Hall, 1991).
[505] Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and After*, p. 239.
[506] Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, p. 209

program, effectively stopping Iranians on many fronts.[507] The American strikes during the Tank War in the Persian Gulf demolished half of Iran's small navy. The July 3rd American attack on Iran's civilian aircraft costing 240 lives was perceived as a clear message that Iran must stop the "longest war" since the Second World War, and Khomeini did so.[508]

The legacy of the war was contradictory: it ironically strengthened both the state and the society, which both emerged with their self-confidence enhanced. To use again Charles Tilly words, the war was instrumental in "state making," meaning "eliminating and neutralizing" the state's internal political rivals and enemies.[509] And yet the war changed relations between the state and society, as it simultaneously created a mass society with its demands unfulfilled. The war claimed approximately one million causalities for Iran, without victory. By 1986, the number of *Basiji* volunteer militia sharply declined. By 1988 the inflation rate was 26 percent, and the unemployment rate reached even higher figures. These figures, writes Pesaran, were "amongst the biggest recorded in Iran during the post-World-War II period."[510] More importantly, the first government under Khomeini was facing a growing tension between conservative and revolutionary-populist Khomeinist*s*. By 1987, Moslem argues, it became "too clear that the regime's emphasis on Islam, war, revolutionary discourse, and the persona of

---

[507] The policy of 'two losers in one war' was suggested by Henry Kissinger, the former US secretary of the state, and pursued by the US authorities and allowed the U.S. to flow arms to Iran and Iraq to avoid a clear victory. In 1984, the U.S. "inaugurated its 'Operation Staunch' to stop the flow of arms to Iran," given Iran's potential victory over Iraq. The 1986 cover operation of the arms dealing between the U.S. and Iran, or the so-called Iran-Contra/Irangate scandal is another example. Also, from the start of the war, Israel was selling arms to Iran. See Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution*, p. 212.

[508] The damage of the war to Iran was about $97 billion; see *UN Security Council*, S/23322, December 24, 1991, quoted in Jahangir Amuzegar, *Iran's economy under the Islamic Republic* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), p. 422. The cost of the war exceeded Iran's total oil revenues in the Twentieth century; see Kerman Mofid, *The Economic Consequences of the Gulf* War (New York: 1990), p. 147.

[509] Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," p. 181

[510] Hashem Pesaran, " The Iranian Foreign Exchange Policy and the Black Market for Dollars," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 24: 101-25, p. 110

Khomeini were insufficient for governing Iran."[511] The crisis in the economy, the frustration and alienation in society, and the systematic deadlock and ideological factionalism in politics alarmed the regime, pushing the state to take some initiatives for change. "Perhaps more than anyone," writes Moslem, "it was Khomeini who had woken up to this reality." For this reason, "the engine for change was Khomeini himself."[512] The change was aimed at the consolidation of the Islamic Republic and the institutionalization of the *velayat-e faqih*, and also contributed to the rationalisation, and thus secularisation, of the Khomeinist state. Such rationalization of power, however, did not contribute to democratization, but instead intensified and enhanced the power of the *vali-ye faqih*, and made Khomeini more or less into an absolute *vali-ye faqih*.

## 2.5 Khomeini the Absolute Vali-ye Faqih (1987-1989)

Three significant issues exemplified the transformation of Khomeini into the absolute vali-ye faqih. In all three issues, Khomeini was concerned about the future of the Islamic Republic and was therefore determined to clarify his policy as a legacy before his death. Khomeini's absolutism was meant to ensure the consolidation of Khomeinism.

### 2.5.1: The absolute rule of the state over religion

The exclusion of political rivals and the elimination of so-called "enemies of the *velayat-e faqih*" brought to the fore divisions and differences within the Khomeinist camp. These revolved "around the soul of the state," that is "the characteristics of the government of *velayat-e faqih*" and "its Islamicity."[513] The first faction, the conservative

---

[511] Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002) p. 72.
[512] Ibid
[513] Ibid, p. 47

or traditional right, backed by the bazaari merchants and the orthodox clergy, held a conservative position on the nature of the Islamic state and "wanted strict implementation of *sharia* in the socio-cultural spheres."[514] The second faction, the populist-revolutionaries, by contrast "supported state-sponsored redistributive and egalitarian policies."[515] They also believed that primary Islamic ordinances (*ahkam-e awaliye*), derived from two Islamic sources of the Quran and the Tradition of the Prophet (the *Sunnat*) were insufficient and therefore Muslims living in modern times needed to issue secondary ordinances (*ahkam-e sanaviyeh*).[516] Khomeini trusted both factions. He appointed the six jurist members of the Guardian Council, the legislative body with veto power over the *Majles*' bills, from among the conservatives. At the same time he strongly supported the statist-revolutionary bills in the *Majles* and the populist-revolutionary plans provided by Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Musavi (1980-1989). In the struggle between the two Khomeinist camps, "Khomeini shrewdly pursued his unique policy of 'dual containment.'"[517]

Khomeini's charisma was the backbone of his policy of "two-handed way," hiding the constitutional contradictions in the institutional setting of the first government of the Republic. By 1987, however, Khomeini's policy of 'dual containment' was no longer effective, given the ever-increasing disagreements over economic, socio-cultural, and military policies between the two factions. From December 1987 until his death in June 1989, Khomeini issued various decrees to clarify his socio-political positions and

---

[514] Organizationally, the conservative Khomeinists have been supported by the Society of Combatant Clergy (*Jame'eh Rouhaniyat-e Mobarez*) and the Allied Islamic Society (*Jamiyat-e Mo'talefeh-ye Islami*).
[515] Organizationally, the populist-revolutionary Khomeinists have been supported by the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization (*Sazman-e Mojahdin-e Enghelab-e Islami*) and the Society of Combatant Clerics (*Maj'ma-e Rouhaniyon-e Mobarez*). The central committee of the Islamic Republican Party, until its dissolution in 1986, was more inclined to the revolutionary Khomeinists and less to the conservatives.
[516] Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, pp. 48-9.
[517] Ibid, p. 65

sided with the revolutionary-populist camp. He also created a new institution; The Expediency Council (*Majma'e Tashkhis-e Maslehat-e Nezam*), an institutional mediator between the two Khomeinist camps in the *Majles* and the Guardian Council, paving the way for further institutionalization of the *velayat-e faqih*.

In December 1987, after continuous tensions between the conservative Guardian Council and the populist-revolutionary *Majles* over the tax bill and the labour law, Khomeini intervened and authorized the government to introduce bills essential to the interests of the state. In his speech he insisted, "the state can by using this power, replace those fundamental...Islamic systems, by any kind of social, economic, labour... commercial, urban affairs, agricultural, or other system, and can make the services...that are the monopoly of the state...into an instrument for the implementation of general and comprehensive politics."[518] When President Khamenei interpreted Khomeini's argument, suggesting that "the executive branch...should have a permanent presence in society...within the limits of Islamic laws and Islamic principles,"[519] Khomeini harshly responded by blaming Khamenei for misrepresenting his argument and his ruling. In January 1988 he made it clear that

> the government [state] that is a part of the absolute vice-regency of the Prophet of God is one of the primary injunctions (*ahkam-e awaliyeh*) of Islam and has priority over all other secondary injunctions, even prayers, fasting and *haj*....The government is empowered to unilaterally revoke any *sharia* agreement that it has conducted with people when those agreements are contrary to the interests of the country or of Islam.[520]

---

[518] Khomeini, "Khomeini Ruling on State Powers Report," broadcast 23 December 1978, FBIS-NES-87, 24 December 1987, quoted in Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 135.

[519] "Khamene'i Delivers Friday Prayer Sermons," broadcast on Tehran Domestic-Service 1 January 1988, FBIS-NES-88-001, 4 January 1988, quoted in Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 135

[520] "Khomeini Answers Khamene'i Letter on Authority," broadcast 1 January 1988, FBIS-NES-88-004, 7 January 1988; quoted in Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 135. And *Ettela'at*, January 9, 1988; quoted in Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 74

Khomeini as the absolute *vali-ye faqih* came to the view that all aspects of Islam were subordinate to the interests of the Islamic state. "From now on religion would serve the Islamic state rather than vice versa."[521] For Khomeini, as Brumberg put it, "the *faqih* was not merely the interpreter of the law, but in some sense the *vehicle* of law itself."[522] Khomeini, indeed, "implied that the vice regent of God had the authority to *create* both divine and secondary injunctions."[523] According to Mehdi Moslem, "although Khomeini in theory granted new and unparalleled powers to the *faqih*, he at the same time drastically undermined the religiousness of the regime and bolstered its populist-republican dimension."[524] Khomeini, Moslem argues, provided the state "with the authority not only to intervene in the economy but the right to use its discretion to suspend even the pillars of Islam."[525]

Khomeini's statement was bold but certainly not new. According to Brumberg, "Khomeini had long believed in the utilitarian tasks of government and had used the term *interests* in the context as far back as 1941."[526] This time, however, he clearly "broke from the historical position of the religious establishment in Iran with regard to state ordinances."[527] The statement was extremely significant, because, as Brumberg put it, "Khomeini emerged as a primary routinizer of his own charisma."[528] Khomeini as the absolute *vali-ye faqih* "by design or default" lay the foundation for greater tensions over his legacy and, indeed, over "the very nature and role of the state." The populist-

---

[521] Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 260.
[522] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 135.
[523] Ibid, p. 136
[524] Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p.74
[525] Ibid
[526] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 136.
[527] Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 74.
[528] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 140.

revolutionary Khomeinists "sought to routinize Khomeini's charisma in the *Majles* and government," while the conservative Khomeinists "tried to rescue the idea of charismatic rule by defending the investment of all authority in the *person* of the *faqih*."[529]

Khomeini's exceptional statement was followed by his order to establish a new institution, protecting the interests of the state over everything, even religious obligations. In February 1988 the institution of the Expediency Council – headed by the president and consisting of six jurists of the Guardian Council, six MPs, and the minister related to the contested bill – was established to act as a final arbiter between the *Majles* and the Guardian Council over the contested bills. According to Ansari, Khomeini was "instrumental in seeking to transform Iranian sensibilities away from a dependence on personalities towards a more institutionalized order." His 1988 statement "seemed to point towards a pragmatic rationalization, if not secularization, of the entire order and by implication the subjection of Islamic dictates to the 'national' interest."[530] But neither Khomeini's rational statement nor his new institution served democratic transition, but instead served the interests of the Khomeinist state by rationalizaing and institutionalizing the office of the *velayat-e faqih*.

### 2.5.2: The "poisonous chalice" of the Peace

"After accepting the ceasefire," reported Khomeini's son, "he could no longer walk....He never again spoke in public...and he fell ill and was taken to the hospital."[531] By 1988 Khomeini realized the war was no longer in the interests of the state, and was undermining the very survival of the Republic. Despite his fiery talks against imperialism

---

[529] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, pp. 136-37.
[530] Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and After*, p. 240.
[531] Ahmad Khomeini, *Yadegar-e Imam*, vol. 6, p. 468; quoted in Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 270

and the infidel enemy, as the founding father of the Republic Khomeini had no choice but, to use his own phrase, to drink from "the poisonous chalice," and save the state: "How unhappy I am because I have survived and have drunk the poisonous chalice of accepting the resolution....at this juncture I regard it to be in the interest of the revolution and of the system."[532]

Ayatollah Khomeini accepted the ceasefire in the summer of 1988 and died in the summer of 1989. During this period Khomeini expressed his "absolute" authority in three specific events. First, following the end of the war, the People's Mojahedin Organization, the opposition group based in Iraq, launched a military attack against Iran. The regime response was harsh: the Mojahedin's forces were massacred on the battle fronts and several thousand jailed political opponents were executed in the prisons.[533]

Second, Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie's novel *Satanic Verses* created much tension between Iran and the West, and contributed to the increasingly complex contradictions of the Khomeinist state and of the state of *Khomeinism*.

Third, after a decision taken by the Assembly of the Experts in 1985 it was expected that Khomeini's loyal student, Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, would succeed him. Montazeri was the only high ranking cleric who supported Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih*, and contributed in theory and practice to the institutionalization of the *velayat-e faqih*. However, Montazeri frequently criticized the violation of human rights by the regime and supported the rights of the regime's opposition. Montazeri also challenged the regime's new reign of terror in the summer and autumn of 1988. He did

---

[532] "Khomeini Message on *Hajj*, Resolution 598," broadcast 20 July 1988, FBIS-NES-88-140, 21 July 1988, quoted from in Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 142.
[533] For an informative and insightful account of this event, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

not accept the post-war wave of executions, but voiced his opposition. Disappointed with Montazeri's reactions, Khomeini asked him to resign and ordered the Assembly of the Experts to meet and make a decision on the future leadership of the Republic. The purge of the only Ayatollah loyal to the doctrine of the *velayat-e faqih* set the stage for the revision and the redefinition of Khomeini's doctrine of the *velayat-e faqih*.

### 2.5.3: The Succession: the Rationalization of the Velayat-e Faqih

There was one last work for Khomeini to fulfil before he died in June 1989: his succession. With Montazeri's dismissal, Khomeini needed to find a successor. The 1979 Constitution was explicit in the theological qualifications of the *vali-ye faqih*, indicating in addition to all personal and political qualifications, only one among the five Grand Ayatollahs as the prominent *marj'a*, or the source of imitation, could hold the office. The problem was that none among the Grand Ayatollahs was sympathetic to Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih*. Moreover, the leading Grand Ayatollahs lacked the personal charisma or high political qualifications required for the office. However, there were a number of middle-ranking clerics who accepted Khomeini's theory and held the necessary political requirements. The best solution was to revise the Constitution to save the Khomeinist state. Following Khomeini's instruction, the Assembly for the Revision of the Constitution was struck, consisting of twenty members appointed by Khomeini and five members elected by the *Majles*.

The 1989 Constitution was a departure from the 1979 Constitution. First, given the existence of parallel political institutions the revised constitution aimed at creating greater centralization of the political system in a number of ways: it reinforced the president's authority by eliminating the position of prime minister; it eliminated the

competition between the president and the prime minister as experienced; it created a more powerful rival to the elected president by establishing a competition between an elected president with little authority and the religious leader of the republic (*Rahbar*) with extensive authority. The president's power with removal of the position of the prime minister still remained less than the power of the *vali-ye faqih*. The new Constitution increased and expanded the power of the *faqih* by transferring the president's task of coordinating the three branches of government to the office of the *velayat-e faqih*. The 1989 Constitution made it explicit that the *vali-ye faqih* holds an "absolute" power by adding the phrase *motlaqeh* to the Articles 107-110, defining his absolute authority. The 1989 Constitution, under Article 110, listed the expanded authority of the *vali-ye faqih* and began a new era for the future of Khomeinism. The leader was given authority to delineate general policies and supervise the execution of decisions; to devise national referenda; to hold the supreme command of the armed forces; to declare war; to appoint, dismiss, and accept the resignation of the six jurists of the Guardian Council, the Chief Justice, the head of the national radio and television, the chief commanders of the Revolutionary Guard and of the armed forces. Moreover, the new Constitution replaced the five-members of the High Court (the judiciary council) with the individual position of the Chief Justice appointed by the *vali-ye faqih*.

Second, Article 110 of the new Constitution vested constitutional authority in the Expediency Council. In addition to its original task of acting as mediator between the *Majles* and the Guardian Council, the Expediency Council was elevated to a consultative body for the *vali-ye faqih*.

Third and more importantly, Article 109 of the amended Constitution separated the position of the *marj'a* from that of the *faqih*, setting the stage for the selection of a new *vali-ye faqih* who could be a middle-ranking cleric. According to the new Constitution, as specified in Article 109, the *vali-ye faqih* no longer needed to hold the religious qualification of the *marj'a-e taqlid*, or source of religious emulation. Khomeini's theory of the *velayat-e faqih*, writes Moin, "received a blow, as it effectively, in the long run, separated the position of the 'leader' from the institution of *marja'iyat*, subordinating the latter to the state."[534]

More than anyone else it was Khomeini himself who ironically contributed most to such a drastic change. "The Imam," as Hashemi-Rafsanjani claimed, "saw the existence of emulation in the constitution to be against the interests of the Islamic Republic and believed that the two worlds of religion and politics required different types of expertise, and at the moment we require a man with the expertise in the latter."[535]

It was paradoxical that Khomeini's priority respecting the interests of the state led him to revive his theory of the *velayat-e faqih* by reducing the theological qualifications needed and separating the position of the *marj'a* from that of the *faqih*. This surprisingly was in effect the separation of religion from politics! The rationalization of the office of the *velayat-e faqih*, however, did not lead to the ascendancy of legal-rational authority in the Republic. Rather, such rationalization was a "critical shift from charismatic to traditional authority."[536] It was also a boost toward greater institutionalization of political absolutism. The infusion of the word *motlaqe*, meaning "absolute", prior to *velayat-e faqih* in the 1989 Constitution was an authoritarian, rather than totalitarian interpretation

---

[534] Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 294.
[535] *Keyhan*, June 10, 1989, quoted in Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 80.
[536] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, p. 148.

of Khomeini's earlier statement on the supremacy of the interests and survival of the state.

On 3 June 1989 Khomeini died. The elected Assembly of the Experts appointed Ali Khamenei as the new leader of the Islamic Republic. Thus, as Khomeini died the first government of the Republic came to an end; *Khomeinism*, however, survived and became institutionalized. Khomeini's death and the birth of the second government of the Republic revealed the problematic of the state of *Khomeinism* and the Khomeinist state, to be discussed in the following chapter.

## 3. Conclusion

The Khomeinist state under Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership combined the theory of *velayat-e faqih* with republican institutions. The state was a mishmash of totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy. Yet, Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary charisma, the currency of populist-revolutionary ideas, and the state's unlimited institutional power strengthened the totalitarian elements of the Khomeinist state. After the fall of Bazargan's liberal interim government in the winter of 1979, and the removal of the liberal President Banisadr in the summer 1981, using Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi's phrase, the Islamic Republic turned into a "Clerical Oligarchy," a clerical polity "with modern repressive, ideological, and economic apparatuses of control." The state not only kept the Shah's military and police apparatuses, but created new revolutionary institutions to expand its control: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps with some 100,000 members, the *Basiji* with over 300,000 militias, a number of Islamic Associations in public administrations, universities, and workplaces, and formal and informal organized gangs called *Hezbollahi* groups. The state held a unique means of

communication with the people through both traditional channels – such as over 50,000 mosques, religious schools, and weekly Friday-Prayer meetings – modern media such as Radio and Television, and many newspapers run by the state.[537]

Only a few days after the revolution the Khomeinist state faced resistance from a number of social and political groups. The women, ethnic minorities (Azeri and Kurds), and The National Democratic Front – a pro-Mosaddeq liberal-left political party – were among the first groups in opposition. A group of women protested the policy of the Islamic Republic on the covering of women's heads on International Women's Day on 8 March 1979. In August 1979, The National Democratic Front organized a demonstration objecting to the closure of the independent newspaper *Ayandegan*. The socio-political resistance and the state's repression continued. By 1981, the state succeeded in eliminating and dismantling most of the opposition, including Muslims and secular-leftist groups such as the People's Mojahedin Organization (MKO), the Organization of Iranian People's *Fadaian* Guerrillas (Minority), the Worker's Path Organization (*Rah-e Kargar*), and a number of pro-Ali Shariati groups such as the Ideals of Dispossessed (*Arman-e Mostaz'afin*). According to Abrahamian, in less than six months, 2,665 opponents, of which 80 percent belonged to the Islamic *Mojahedin*, were executed.[538] Thousands were imprisoned or fled into exile. The reign of terror, writes Abrahamian, cost over 8,000 lives.[539] In 1983, the Islamic Republic eliminated the *Tudeh* Party and other non-militant Marxists such as the Organization of Iranian People's *Fadaian* (Majority) who had supported the regime's reign of terror against the liberals, progressive Muslims and the

---

[537] Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi, "Clerical Oligarchy and the question of Democracy in Iran," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 52, No. 10, March 2001, P.2
[538] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iranian Mojahedin*, p. 68.
[539] Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured confession*, p. 169.

militant leftists. This shows why Iran's third wave was short of a meaningful party politics and a serious participation by the opposition groups.

In addition to the nature of the state, however, the failure of democratic transition was also due to a number of serious mistakes on the part of the opposition. The opposition - leftists, nationalist, and many liberal and progressive Muslims – refused to support either women's demonstrations or the protest against strangulating the free press. They perceived civil rights and liberal values as secondary to the immediate goal of fighting imperialism. As Haideh Moghissi argues, "the unconditional support for Khomeini's anti-imperialism, and the incorporation and subordination of the women's movement in a male-defined anti-imperialist movement" contributed to marginalizing the civil and human rights issues.[540] Most opposition made no specific reference to the urgent problems of women and youth, and instead appealed only to the dispossessed masses. The currency of revolutionary populism and the nationalist and patriarchal political culture on the part of many opposition groups contributed to the consolidation of *Khomeinism*.[541] Moreover, the Regime's anti-imperialist rhetoric, the American Hostage Crisis, the Iran-Iraq War, and the strong legacy of Dependency Theory and Third Worldism contributed to the confusion of some of the opposition about the nature of the Khomeinist state. This confusion created an atmosphere where many of the opposition

---

[540] Haideh Moghissi, "Troubled Relationship: Women, nationalism, and the Left movement in Iran," in Stephanie, Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), p. 210. See also, Haideh Moghissi, *Populism and Feminism in Iran: Women's Struggle in a Male-defined Revolutionary Movement* (London: Macmillan, 1994).

[541] Haideh Moghissi, "Troubled Relationship: Women, nationalism, and the Left movement in Iran," pp. 216-219. According to Moghissi, many opposition groups called "feminists as 'bourgeois'" and celebrated a traditional gender role in which revolutionary women must sacrifice her individual rights.

were simply *reacting* to the regime's *actions* and failed to build an independent social movement.[542]

Sectarianism severely weakened the institutional power of the opposition. This happened, Saeed Rahnema argues, because of "confusions and disagreements over the issue of the nature of the regime – whether to support or confront it."[543] The People's Mojahedin Organization, the *Fadaian* (Minority), *Rah-e Kargar*, *Peykar*, and the Kudish parties took a radical path against the Islamic Republic. This radical militancy proved to be counter productive, and instead contributed to the marginalization of these groups. The *Tudeh* Party, the *Fadaian* (Majority), and the Militant Muslims Movement (*Jonbesh-e Mosalmanan-e Mobarez*) of Habibollah Payman sided with the clerics and fought the liberals. They saw the revolutionary clerics as either harmless or without future, and instead attacked the liberals as the main agents of dependent-capitalism, or even imperialism. They reduced socialism to the Regime's "nationalizing of the economy and anti-imperialism."[544] This was perhaps the most significant mistake and misreading by a number of the opposition groups. In retrospect, it is legitimate to argue that "a Left-liberal alliance would have altered the balance of power"[545] in favor of democratic forces.

In sum, a number of factors contributed to the consolidation of *Khomeinism* in the first government of the Republic. They included Ayatollah Khomeini's Charisma, the multilayered repressive institutions of the state, the currency of populist-revolutionary ideology, and paradoxically, the strategy taken by a number of the opposition groups.

---

[542] Ali Mirsepassi, "The tragedy of the Iranian Left," in Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), p. 236.
[543] Saeed Rahnema, "The Left and the Struggle for Democracy in Iran,"pp. 253-54.
[544] Ali Mirsepassi, "The tragedy of the Iranian Left," p. 237.
[545] Ibid, p. 238

Much of the opposition shared the hegemonic political culture of revolutionary nativism and anti-liberalism. Many attacked the liberals, discredited liberal civil rights, and prioritized struggle against imperialism, and often considered gender and ethnic rights secondary and peripheral. Some were confused about the nature of *Khomeinism*; they fought the liberals and sided with the Khomeinists. What they saw in *Khomeinism* was not totalitarianism but anti-imperialism. Hence, it is legitimate to argue that both *political* and *social* forces played a part in the consolidation of the Khomeinist state. But it is also legitimate to argue that the consolidation of the Khomeinist state was not predetermined; it could have been avoided if the opposition forces had thought and acted differently.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## "Routinization" of the Islamic Republic: *Khomeinism* after Khomeini

### 1. Introduction

In post-Khomeini era, Iran's third wave went through three different political periods: the second, third, and fourth governments of the Islamic Republic. Each government presented a different face of *Khomeinism*. In this chapter I shall examine the complex dynamics of Iran's socio-political changes under the second government. During the second government (1989-1997), the Iranian state and society moved in two opposite directions. A number of factors contributed to this move. They included, but were not limited to: the end of Iraq-Iran war; Ayatollah Khomeini's death; and the personalities and politics of two leading characters of Iran's second government, Ali Khamenei, the new *vali-ye faqih* and Ayatollah's Khomeini's successor, and Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the powerful president of the Republic. In the first part of this chapter, I shall examine the nature of the Khomeinist state in general, particularly how it entered a post-charismatic, post-war, and post-totalitarian phase during the second government. In the second part, I shall look at the dynamics of civil society and how it experienced structural and non-structural changes which eventually contributed to the emergence of Iran's 1997 May Movement (2$^{nd}$ *Khordad* 1376) and the making of the third government: Iran's reformist government (1997-2005). In sum, this chapter looks at the political and social origins of the 1997 reform movement. To this end, I shall examine how and why elite factionalism and the dynamics of civil society created another critical juncture for a transition to democracy in modern Iranian history.

## 2. The Nature of the Khomeinist State

The Islamic Republic of Iran hardly fits within the current categories of states, given the distinctive character of its institutional arrangements and intellectual foundations. Nonetheless, Iran's post-revolutionary state also shares some features with other states. This is why a comparative study of political regimes helps find common elements in the rise and fall of democracies in the larger historical context.

I shall first define what the Islamic Republic of Iran is not, and then turn to what the Iranian state stands for. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the post-revolutionary Iranian state is not a traditional Islamic state for a number of reasons: First, it is conceptually an oxymoron. There is no such thing as an Islamic state because Islam never introduced a state model. Thus, the Islamic state, as it is claimed to be, is a modern phenomenon invented by contemporary Islamists, and is not congruent with historical Islam. As such, the essentialist position of both Muslim apologists and Western Orientalists is neither conceptually nor historically legitimate. Secondly, theoretically, Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of the *velayat-e faqih* was a major departure from historical Shiite Islam. Thirdly, Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of the Islamic state, Sami Zubaida argues, proved to be "Islamic in its personnel" at best, since the institutional forms of the Iranian state have no "particularly Islamic features." Not only does the Islamic *sharia* "constitute only one element among many,"[546] but Ayatollah Khomeini favoured a relatively dynamic interpretation of the *sharia* in the socio-economic policies of the Republic. More importantly, the interests of the state and of the statesmen trumped the rulings of the Islamic *sharia*. In 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini explicitly argued that the

---

[546] Sami Zubaida, "Is Iran an Islamic State?" in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, eds. *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), P. 118.

state ruled by the *vali-ye faqih* who, if necessary, can stop the implementation of the *sharia* and dismiss the founding pillars of Islam in order to protect the general interests of the state. Ayatollah Khomeini himself, acting in the general interests of the state, established an institutional body for the identification of the interests of the state (the Expediency Council), accordingly accepted the 1988 ceasefire with Iraq, removed Grand Ayatollah Shariat-Madari from his religious rank and Ayatollah Montazeri from his political career, and eventually ordered the amendment of the Constitution in order to drop the religious condition of the *marja-i yat* (the source of emulation) for the future leadership of the Islamic Republic.

As such, the state founded by Ayatollah Khomeini is by no means a revival of tradition or a reassertion of traditional Islamic values. Many scholars such as Ervand Abrahamian, Sami Zubaida, Ali Mirsepassi, Mansoor Moaddel, Asghar Schirazi, and H. Chehabi, among others, suggest that *Khomeinism*, and consequently the state he founded, is a modern construction. For Mansoor Moaddel, the Khomeinist state is a form of "third world fascism," because both states share similarities in "ideology": "the relative autonomy of the state", and "the system of police repression."[547] Ervand Abrahamian identifies *Khomeinism*, and thus the state he institutionalized, with "populism." Like other populist movements, he argues, *Khomeinism* was "mainly a middle-class movement

---

[547] Mnasoor Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 257-62). Similarly, though sharply different in the political approach, Zalmay Khalilzad, a prominent American neo-conservative, co-author with Chery Benard, called the Khomeinist state a "fundamentalist autocracy" and a "totalitarian one-party state" modelled on fascism and communism; see Zalmay Khalilzad and Cheryl Benard, *The Government of God: Iran's Islamic Republic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

that mobilized the masses with radical-sounding rhetoric against external powers and entrenched power-holding classes, including the comprador bourgeoisie."[548]

According to Bobby Sayyid, both Moaddel and Abrahamian are helpful in pointing out the "non-traditional" character of the Khomeinist state, and yet neither "Third World fascism" nor "populism" can explain the nature of the Iranian state. The Khomeinist state is not a form of "Third World fascism" because "the ideology of fascism is intimately related to discourses of nationalism. Islamists explicitly reject nationalism, declaring that 'an Islamic state is not a nationalist state because ultimate allegiance is owed to God and thereby to the community of believers – the *Ummah*.'"[549] Furthermore, the Khomeinist state is not a fascist state, because the existence of a "system of police repression" is not unique to fascism. Many modern states, including the Bolsheviks, have used repressive technology.[550] For this reason, Sayyid argues, "fascism as an analytical tool is of limited help in understanding the Islamic republic."[551] Similarly, the notion of populism, as suggested by Abrahamian, is of limited use to grasp the nature of the Khomeinist state. Abrahamian, argues Sayyid, "marginalizes the significance of Islamism" while Khomeini was explicit in his sincere commitment to his Islamic discourse. "After all, the classical paradigm of Latin American populism was provided by Peron in Argentina, or Vargas in Brazil, and neither of these populists made

---

[548] Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, p. 38; for his critique, see Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1997), p. 92

[549] Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear*, p. 91

[550] Here Sayyid refers to Darius Rejali's account: "Rejali provides a Foucaultian type of analysis of the relationship between the development of repressive technologies and development of the modern subjectivity in Iran. He points out the use of torture were linked not to a particular political regime but to the development of the modern state itself." Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear*, p. 122. See Darius M. Rejali, *Torture and Modernity: Self, Society, and State in Modern Iran* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

[551] Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear*, 92

much use of Christian discourse in their attempts to build a new political order."[552] In his recent work, however, Abrahamian put more emphasis on the so-called Islamic nature of the state. The constitution of the Islamic Republic, he argues, ensures "equality of man and women before the law," "equal job opportunity," and individual rights "regardless of race, color, language, or creed." The constitution also "implicitly incorporated the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. It avoided, however, describing these 'as natural rights.' To have done so would have undermined the notion that all rights were derived from divinity."[553] For this reason, Abrahamian argues, the Islamic Republic "is a mishmash of traditional theocracy and modern democracy." [554] Similarly, H. Chehabi suggests that "Iran is the only example of a post-traditional theocracy." [555]

And yet, the concept of theocracy is not helpful in pointing out the nature of the Iranian state because, writes Chehabi, "God does not exercise His sovereignty directly," and therefore,

> a group of men rule in His name. These men may indeed believe that they do not act in their own interests and are instead instruments of the unfolding of a divine plan – but Communist leaders also claimed to act in the name of historical necessity...which does not prevent us from analyzing their mode of rule independently of the bases of legitimacy which they claimed.[556]

Furthermore, "Iran is not ruled by the clergy but by a politicized section of it," given the separation of political and religious leadership in the post-Khomeini era.[557] As such, the

---

[552] Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear*, p. 93

[553] Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," in Bruce Cumings, Ervand Abrahamian, and Moshe Ma'oz, eds., *Inventing the Axis of Evil* (New York: The New Press, 2004), p. 114.

[554] Ibid, p. 115

[555] H. E. Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," *Government and Opposition* 36 (winter 2000), 48-70, p. 48

[556] Ibid, p. 51

[557] Even under Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership, all leading Ayatollahs overtly or covertly opposed the idea of *velayat-e faqih*. Some of them were under house arrest. See H. E. Chehabi, "The Political Regime

intellectual foundation of the Islamic Republic fits neither a traditional-Islamic state (theocracy), nor a modern fascist state, nor a solely populist state.

Iran's post-revolutionary state, in spite of its initial attempts, failed to establish a totalitarian state; "Iran's totalitarianism was stillborn."[558] According to Chehabi, the Iranian state lacks major features of totalitarian government as defined by Carl Friedrich.[559] The Iranian state failed to maintain an "official ideology," given the growing pragmatic tendencies in domestic and foreign policies of the state. More importantly,

> Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which theoretically is the basis of the dominant ideology and hence of all legislation, addresses only a limited range of issues and these almost all fall into the realm of private law. Traditional Islam has very little to say about many questions of public policy, which means that Islamists have to invent a lot by deducing rules and regulations from principles that do not address those issues. And since they engage in this act of invention on the basis of a religion that admits of distinct interpretations, they inevitably disagree with each other.[560]

Hence, because Islam is not an ideology there is hardly any substantive content to so-called Islamic ideology in the politics of the state. The Iranian state is short of another hallmark of totalitarianism: a modern single-mass centralized political party. The Islamic Republican Party clearly failed to fulfill such a role and was dissolved in the mid-1980's. The decentralization of the Islamic faith and openness to diverse interpretations together with elite factional politics contributed to the development of limited pluralism in the

---

of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," *Government and Opposition* 36 (winter 2000), 48-70, p. 52.

[558] Ibid, p. 54

[559] C.J. Friedrich and Z. K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 9,10, quoted in Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 54. .

[560] Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 56

Iranian state and prevented the success of totalitarian tendencies.[561] By the same token, a

relative diversity of opinion in the press and the existence of the independent private

sector in the economy suggest that the state does not exhibit two other features of

totalitarianism. The last hallmark of a totalitarian state is terror, and yet "terror is not

specific to totalitarian regimes and can also appear in authoritarian ones."[562] According to

Linz, there is "no correlation between the use of terror and the type of non-democratic

regime."[563] In sum, if the intentions were realized, the Islamic Republic might have been

a totalitarian system; however, "such an outcome was prevented by the organizational

and ideological peculiarities" of the post-revolutionary state.[564] Likewise, Abbas Milani

argues that "Iran has been ruled by a would-be totalitarian regime." More precisely, the

Islamic Republic "has failed to establish a tight totalitarian hold on power not for lack of

trying, but because various strata of Iranian society, particularly women and students,

have fought vigorously to thwart the regime's attempts to deprive them of their rights."[565]

Having defined what the Islamic Republic is not, it is time to define it in positive

terms. A closer look at the institutional arrangements of the Islamic Republic leads us to a

better understanding of the nature and the type of the state. "The state in the Islamic

Republic of Iran," as Mehdi Moslem put it, "is unique in its institutional arrangements

and distribution of power," because the state is "multilayered and institutionally

diffused."[566] This distinctive institutional arrangement, to use Daniel Brumberg's phrase,

---

[561] Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 59
[562] Ibid, pp. 59-60
[563] Juan Linz, "Types of Political Regimes and Respect for Human Rights: Historical and Cross-National Perspectives," in Asbjorn Eide and Bernt Hagtvet, eds., *Human Rights in Perspective: A Global Assessment* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1999); quoted in Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 60
[564] Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 69
[565] Abbas Milani, A Historical Perspective, *Journal of Democracy* 16.4 (2005) 23-34, p.24
[566] Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 35.

is "dissonant institutionalization,"[567] which at once combines Ayatollah's Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* with the Republican institutions inherited from Iran's 1905 Constitution and adapted from the constitution of French Fifth Republic. Iran's distinctive feature characteristic among non-democratic regimes, Chehabi argues, is that it holds "regular parliamentary and presidential elections in which voters have a genuine (but limited) choice."[568] Given its Republican institutions, the Islamic Republic seems to share more features with contemporary modern Western states than with theocracy. In practice, however, the Republican institutions are subordinated to the rule of the *vali-ye faqih*. Unlike parliamentary democracies, the parliament in the Iranian state must share its legislative authority with the Guardian Council, whose jurist members are appointed by the *vali-ye faqih*. "In fact the constitution clearly states that without the existence of the Guardian Council, the *Majles* is devoid of sovereignty." The *Majles* must also share its legislative authority with the Expediency Council whose chair and most members are appointed by the *vali-ye faqih*. Similarly, unlike presidential democracies, the president in the Islamic Republic is ranked next to the *vali-ye faqih*. Article 113 of the Constitution suggests that "after the leader, the president is the highest official in the country." Furthermore, the *vali-ye faqih* holds many institutional "extended arms,"[569] ranging from the powerful Revolutionary Foundations to the parallel institutions accountable not to the Republican institutions, but to the *vali-ye faqih*.[570]

---

[567] Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*, chapter 5

[568] Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 64

[569] Asghar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 73-75

[570] Some of the powerful Revolutionary Foundations (*Nehad-haye Enghelabi*) include the Foundation of Dispossessed, the Martyr Foundation, the Fifteen of Khordad Foundation, and Imam's Khomeini's Relief Committee. They receive a "considerable amount of their funding from the annual budget," and yet are not accountable to the government. Some of the paralegal institutions are the Offices of the Representative of the *vali-ye faqih* in almost all public organizations and the Association of Friday Prayer-Leaders. For an

The Iranian state, as discussed above, is neither a democratic nor a totalitarian regime; the regime maintains a mixture of "post-totalitarian" and "authoritarian" features. Authoritarian regimes, to use Juan Linz's definition, are

> political systems with limited, non-responsible political pluralism; without an elaborated and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities; without either extensive or intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader, or, occasionally, a small group, exercise power from within formally ill-defined, but actually quite predictable, limits.[571]

Iran's limited political pluralism is best represented in the two-tier electoral system in which "candidates are screened, genuine opposition candidates are prevented from running and political parties are discouraged."[572] Citizens are implicitly divided into two groups of insiders (*khodi*) and outsiders (*gheir-e khodi*), excluding the latter from meaningful political participation. This is enforced in practice by the Guardian Council. Moreover, as in post-totalitarian Eastern Europe, the ideological mentality of the Iranian state is weakened, largely due to the "discrepancy between the constant reiteration of the importance of ideology and the ideology's growing irrelevance to policy making or, worse, its transparent contradiction with social reality."[573] Furthermore, the relative decline of intensive political mobilization in the post-Khomeini era indicates that the state remains less totalitarian and more authoritarian. Last but not least, the extent and limits of leadership in the Iranian state is "formally ill-defined", leaving different levels of the leadership with their own mentality and thus creating tensions within the system. The

---

informative and insightful account of these institutions, see Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, pp. 32-35.

[571] Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan (eds), *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1970), p. 255; quoted in Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 63.

[572] Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 65

[573] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*, pp. 48-49, quoted in Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 67

elite factionalism and the inner contradictions in the constitution contributed to such leadership diversity. As Chehabi points out, three top clerical leaders of Iran's reformist government subscribed to different versions of the Islamic Republic: the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei was in favor of a totalitarian state, the Chair of the Expediency Council, Rafsanjani, favoured "a variation on Janos Kadar's famous (post-totalitarian) dictum 'those who are not against us are for us,'" and President Khatami was more proximate to democracy.[574] As such, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Chehabi argues, "like totalitarian regimes, proclaims the absolute supremacy over the public life of an ideology, i.e., Islam; like authoritarian regimes it permits a limited degree of pluralism; and like democracies it holds elections in which the people sometimes have a genuine choice; to wit Mohammad Khatami's upset victory in the presidential elections of May 1997."[575] Hence, the Islamic Republic synthesizes totalitarianism, post-totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy. Under Ayatollah Khomeini's rule, the state was more inclined to totalitarianism, while in post-Khomeini Iran it has gradually transformed to "early" post-totalitarianism.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is often identified as a theocracy but seldom characterized as a rentier state. Contrary to most expectations, "oil dependency" has increased under the Islamic Republic due to the lack of economic diversity in the non-oil economy, and the domination of inefficient state-owned enterprises and the revolutionary foundations (*bonyads*) over Iran's economy.[576] In the Islamic Republic oil exports dominate both the balance of payments and government fiscal revenues, while the share

---

[574] Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective," p. 69
[575] Ibid, pp. 48-49
[576] M. Karshenas and H. Hakimian, "Oil, Economic Diversification and the Democratic Process in Iran," *Iranian Studies*, 38 (1) March 2005, pp. 67-90, pp. 74, 76.

of manufactured exports has remained only 9 percent.[577] Like the Pahlavi regime, the Islamic Republic remains a rentier state, and as discussed in the third chapter, derives its financial power not from citizens' taxes but rather mainly from oil resources. This makes the state capable of shaping and controlling social-political forces without their consent. After the revolution, Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi observe, Ayatollah Khomeini invoked to "the 'invisible aid of Allah'" to consolidate the post-revolutionary polity. "This invisible aid conveniently materialized in the form of massive crude oil deposits beneath the sands of the Iranian plateau, which continue to provide the regime with a crucial margin of flexibility even amidst economic crisis."[578] Oil, as Michael Ignatieff observes, can be "an obstacle to democracy in every developing society. When a government can get what it needs out of oil derricks and ceases to derive its revenue from taxes, it loses any incentive to respond to the people."[579] The Islamic Republic of Iran "is built on oil and will endure as long as the oil price holds up."[580] And yet, as Abbas Milani put it, "all cannot be blamed on oil. The vicious cycle of despotism and political and economic corruption existed long before the discovery of oil in the early 1900s."[581] However, given the nature of the state (a rentier state with oil-driven politics), the power of oil and petro-dollars remains central in shaping the state's relations with civil society. The Islamic Republic of Iran, like its predecessor, has used this power, making the state a domain dominated by particular rent-seeking interests. The Khomeinist state is a rentier state privileged by petro-dollars, oil revenues, and rents to impose certain policies, to

---

[577] Karshenas and H. Hakimian, "Oil, Economic Diversification and the Democratic Process in Iran," p. 72
[578] Saeed Rahnema and Haideh Moghissi, "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of 'Democracy' in Iran," *MonthlyReview*, March 2001 Vol. 52 No. 10, p. 1

[579] Michael Ignatieff, Iranian Lessons, *New York Times Magazine*, July 17, 2005
[580] Ibid
[581] Abbas Milani, "A Historical Perspective." *Journal of Democracy* 16, no.4 (2005): 23-34, p.29

subsidize and import certain goods, to buy loyalty inside and abroad, to organize anti-democratic groups, and to make and unmake public policies in the interests of the clerical authority. Iran's autocratic rentier state has subsidized and supported all Revolutionary Foundations (*Bonyads*), supervised and controlled by the *vali-ye faqih*, with a gross annual income of almost half that of the state budget.[582] The state has frequently allocated monopoly rights to import and export certain commodities to its loyal supporters. The rentier-state with a broker (*dallal*) economy has produced a new class whose interests and survival rest on the status quo. Most of the counter-reform forces, the conservative hardliners, belong to this state-sponsored class. They were blessed by the economic policy and backed by the political institutions of the second government.

## 2.1. The nature of the second government (1989-1997): "*mullah*-merchant marriage"[583]?

The constitution, Ayatollah Khomeini once argued, "in no way contrasts democracy. Since, the people love the clergy, have faith in the clergy, want to be guided by the clergy, it is only right that the supreme religious authority should oversee the work of the ministers and the president to ensure that they don't make mistakes or go against the Koran."[584] Nonetheless, according to Abrahamian, "this inherent tension remained hidden as long as the public supported the new regime; as long as the nation felt it was waging a life and death struggle against foreign invaders (the Iraqi war lasted from 1980 until 1988); and as long as Khomeini with his charisma was omnipresent."[585] By the late

---

[582] Jahangir Amuzegar, *Iran's Economy under the Islamic Republic* (London: Taurus Press, 1994), p. 100.
[583] This refers to Ali Shariati's argument in a different context where he discussed the historical alliance between the bazaari-merchants and the *ulama* in major social and political events in modern history of Iran. For further discussion, see Ali Shariati, *Collected Workd,* vol. 10, (Tehran: Ferdowsi, 1360/1981)
[584] Oriana Fallaci, "An Interview with Khomeini," *New York Times*, October 7, 1979.
[585] Abrahamian, "*Empire Striks Back,"* pp. 115-16

1980's, however, the socio-political climate had changed, as Ayatollah Khomeini was no longer there. The post-Khomeini state went through three structural changes. The first was a sharp decline in revolutionary fervour after the long years of war, economic hardship and socio-cultural rigidity that gripped Iran in the 1980's. The second was a rapid growth of urban population and a new educated middle class with new demands. The third, too, was demographic; on the one hand, the large number of Iranians born in the 1970's and 1980's entered the political arena and were frustrated with the socio-cultural restrictions and poor economic prospects. On the other hand, the older generation of hardened revolutionaries was exiting, with key figures becoming less active or passing away. The pressure for change focused on easing the country's strict clerical instituted socio-cultural restrictions, promoting political liberalization and economic reforms.[586] The state's response was complex: it institutionalized a traditional-conservative culture, a mercantile-capitalist economy, and an autocratic politics.[587]

## 2.1.1: The Post-Charismatic State: Hegemony of a Traditional-Conservative Culture

Ayatollah Khomeini's death left the country with no obvious successor and the state with a crisis of legitimacy.[588] The main challenge after Khomeini was to institutionalize, or using Weber's phrase, "routinize"[589] Khomeini's charisma.[590] The

---

[586] Mark J. Gasiorowski, "The Power Struggle in Iran," *Middle East Policy,* Vol. VII, No. 4, (October 2000), p. 23.

[587] Daniel Brumberg identifies the post-Khomeini politics as "economically liberal, politically authoritarian, and philosophically traditional." See Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 153.

[588] For more discussions about the concept of legitimacy, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 212-216, and "Politics as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H.H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp.78-79.

[589] According to Weber, three forces impel the routinization of charisma: The first is the resolution of the crisis which led to re-enchantment. The second is the development of economic interest among the leader's disciples, which encourages the leader to address socio-political and economic problems and to redefine the leader's ideological legacy, given the competing factions within the ruling elite. The third is in the

Assembly of Leadership Experts, as discussed before, knowing well that the senior

Ayatollahs distrusted Khomeini's version of Islam, dropped the *marja-e taghlid*

requirement so that Khomeini's position could be inherited by middle-ranking clerics

loyal to Khomeini's doctrine. They quickly appointed *Hojjat-al Islam* Ali Khamenei – a

middle-ranking cleric who was neither a senior religious jurist, a *marja-e taghlid*, nor at

the time even a generally accepted Ayatollah. Most important, Khomeini's successor who

was designated by the ruling clergy had no charismatic personality, in Weber's terms, to

be "awakened" or "tested". But Khomeini's charisma was not transferable to a

successor. Ayatollah Khomeini, writes Milani, was "a unique product of unique historical

circumstances" and thus "irreplaceable." It was Ayatollah "Khomeini who made the

institution of the *velayat-e faqih* powerful, not the other way around."[591]

The term 'charisma', Weber indicates, is applied to certain qualities of an individual

personality by virtue of which he is treated as a 'leader';[592] however, the validity of

charisma or the basis of legitimacy for charismatic authority is subject to recognition of a

---

succession. For Weber, charisma is routinized by three mechanisms: hereditary rule; modern law; the transfer of the leader's power to the traditional office or ruling institution. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol.1, ed., Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 246-254, 1121-1122; quoted in Brumberg (120-121). The latter corresponded to the case of post-Khomeini Iran.For further discussions of the routinization of charisma, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), II, pp.246-254.

[590] Weber argues that there are three types of legitimate domination: legal-rational authority, traditional authority, and charismatic authority. Legal-rational legitimacy rests "on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands;" thus, obedience based upon this authority "is owed to the legally established impersonal order." Traditional legitimacy rests "on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them;" hence, "the obligation of obedience is a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligation." Meanwhile, charismatic legitimacy rests "on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him." Indeed, "it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities in so far as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma." See Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp.215-216)

[591] .Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution*, p. 225

[592] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), II, P. 241.

leader by his followers.[593] There are no such things as appointment or dismissal, career or promotion.[594] In its pure form, charismatic authority is specifically foreign to everyday routine structures and the social relationships directly involved are strictly personal, based on the validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities. If this is not to remain a purely transitory phenomenon but to take on the character of a permanent relationship, it is necessary that it become institutionalized.

Given his lack of personal charisma and strong clerical credentials, Khomeini's successor was perceived to be at most one among equals. Thus, unlike Khomeini who depended on his own charismatic authority, Khamenei was dependent on his peers. The ruling conservative clergy decentralized the power of *vali-ye faqih*, or centralized it in the 'office' of *velayat-e faqih*, with all formal and informal power centers associated with the office. The Expediency Council by a constitutional amendment became the leader's advisory body. The Assembly of Leadership Experts, unlike the case with Ayatollah Khomeini, stood above Khamenei, for it held the authority to dismiss or choose the leader. The members of the Assembly of Leadership Experts are the leading clergy loyal to Khomeini's doctrine. Because of their eminent positions both in the state and religious academies, their power is sufficient to significantly influence the direction of government policies. The principal motive underlying such a transformation, as Weber generally indicates, was the ideal and also material interest of the disciples of the original charismatic leader in the continuation of their position on a stable everyday basis.[595] These interests, Weber argues, generally become conspicuously evident with the

---

[593] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 242.
[594] Ibid, p. 243
[595] Ibid, p. 246

disappearance of the personal charismatic leader and with the problem of succession.[596] Weber also suggests that the way in which this problem is met "is of crucial importance for the character of the subsequent social relationships."[597] The Khomeinist state met the problem of succession by assigning an 'absolute' power to the office of *velayat-e faqih*, filling the personal charismatic gap on the part of Khomeini's successor (Article 57 of the 1989 Constitution).

As Weber indicates, charisma recognizes no one in a position of power on the basis of membership in a socially privileged group. "The only basis of legitimacy for it is personal charisma so long as it is proved; that is, as long as it receives recognition."[598] Being a member of the ruling privileged clergy, Khamenei was designated by the other members to maintain the legacy of Khomeini. According to Milani, Khamenei's "lack of an independent base of support was the critical factor in his selection as the faqih; he did not seem threatening to the rival factions. Aware of his shortcomings, Khamenei in the early stage of his rule stayed above factions."[599] And yet, because he lacked the character required for mediating between the rival factions and balancing their power, he became closer to the conservatives with whom he shared attitudes and was indebted to their support. The conservatives in exchange insisted that Khamenei, although not a "source of imitation", remain above the leading clerics whom they obliged to obey the *vali-ye faqih*'s political rulings.[600] In short, lacking charismatic authority, the office of *velayat-e faqih* came to rest on traditional authority, giving more emphasis to "piety toward

---

[596] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, P. 246.
[597] Ibid, p. 246
[598] Ibid, p. 244
[599] Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution*, p. 224
[600] Asghar Schirazi, *The Constitution of Iran*, pp. 78-111

tradition and toward the master."[601] *Khomeinism* after Khomeini displayed some

patrimonial characteristics in that its fundamental features, to use Weber's typology, are

the personalized character of power and material maintenance of the leader.[602] This

corresponded to the doctrine of the traditional-conservatives who believed in the

subordination of Republicanism to the religious features of the constitution. A leading

traditional-conservative cleric, Ayatollah Ahmad Azari-Qomi, made this explicit:

> The powers delegated to the leader in the constitution are the [extension of the] monopoly of the leader in his duties and responsibilities and do not impose restrictions on his power....[The leader] is like the head of the family who, although in the division of labour [he] takes the responsibility of outsider shopping, leaves for himself the right to interfere in the house where he has delegated the housework to his son.[603]

The routinization of charisma and the succession brought some significant changes to

the fate and future of the Khomeinist state. First, the religious power shifted from the

institution of the *velayat-e faqih* to the religious seminaries, and yet the political authority

of the *vali-ye faqih* remained over and above the religious authority of the *marja-e*

*taqlid*.[604] Secondly, power was concentrated not in the hands of a *vali-ye faqih*, but in the

office of the *velayat-e faqih*. Thirdly, the routinization of charisma transferred power not

to the people, but to the more authoritarian conservative faction of the state. As such, the

office of the *velayat-e faqih* was dominated by the politically authoritarian and

intellectually traditional conservative Khomeinists. "When the charismatic organization

undergoes...rationalization," Max Weber argues, "it is readily possible that, instead of

---

[601] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, III, p. 1008.

[602] Ibid, p. 1014

[603] *Khotut-e Kolli-ye Andishe-haye Imam Khomeini* (Tehran: Centre For Strategic Studies, 1994), p. 316, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, pp. 100-101

[604] Ayatollah Mohamad Yazdi, the prominent traditional conservative and then chief judge, clearly argued that "the leader should be guided only by the Koran, the *Hadiths*, and the Prophet's teachings. The vote of the people can not overrule the representative of the Prophet." See Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, *Iran Times*, May 25, 2001.

recognition being treated as a consequence of legitimacy, it is treated as the basis of

...democratic legitimacy."[605] Nonetheless, in post-totalitarian societies, as Linz and

Stepan observe, the "social presence" of the totalitarian legacy hinders the transition to

democracy.[606] As such, post-Khomeini politics under the second government was far

from democracy, given the presence of the lasting legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini, and the

absence of strong and independent "soft-liners" in the regime and well organized and

powerful "moderates" in the opposition.[607]

### 2.1.2: The Post-Warfare State: Hegemony of a Mercantile-Capitalist Economy

Contrary to the first government, Iran's second government had to rule over a

people who were transforming from "subjects" to "citizens". The war, the first modern

war fought by the Iranian state in 150 years, was instrumental in such a social

transformation. With the civilian targeted in the war of the cities and over a million war

causalities, the war had truly touched and, therefore, taught the entire society. The war,

writes Ansari, "taught Iranians political moderation and cynicism towards authority;" the

fact that Ayatollah Khomeini "could accept the UN-inspired armistice after previously

rejecting it was shocking evidence of the fallibility of man."[608]

By the same token, the second government was to move the state from a

revolutionary phase to one of reconstruction. This was an extremely difficult task, given

---

[605] Max Weber, Economy and Society, vol.1, pp. 266-67

[606] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic transitions*, p. 46

[607] For further discussion on the four-players game, see Adam Przeworski, "The Games of Transition," in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and Samuel Valenzuela, eds., Issues in Democratic Consolidation (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992)

[608] Ali Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000), p. 50

the absence of Khomeini's charisma, the presence of residual revolutionary culture, the

diversity of unfulfilled demands, and the scarcity of resources. Rafsanjani observed,

> we should not deceive our people with these [revolutionary] slogans or create obstacles to the reconstruction of the country....The Imam's guidance [for the postwar Iran] was to relegate the task of reconstruction to the skilled experts without fear of the religiously narrow-minded and pseudo-revolutionaries, spell out the outline of the primary reconstruction goals, and attend to the families of the martyrs.[609]

The first priority was therefore given to the revolutionary warriors. On returning

from war, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard and the paramilitary volunteers, the *Basiji*

militia, were offered both economic and political rewards. "While keeping their

belligerent spirits," Rafsanjani argued, "the *Basijis* should be engaged in the phase of

economic construction in Iran."[610] The "Republic of Reconstruction" (*Sazandegi*), as it

was called by then President Rafsanjani, employed these revolutionary warriors and

incorporated them into the state's financial and political institutions. The creation of this

new merchant class transformed the revolutionary warriors into warrior merchants, and

the state to the clerical mercantilist state.

More importantly, because the conservative Khomeinists gained ascendancy after

Khomeini's death, they were in a better position to pursue and protect their economic

interests. The bazaaris and leading-conservative clerics favoured an economic system of

merchant-middlemen free to import, sell, and export. They opposed a modern form of

taxation and a state-led economy with redistributive-egalitarian policies. A statist

economy, two leading conservative clerics claimed, would result in a "godless" socialist

society where religious people would have less money to contribute to religious

---

[609] *Keyhan*, Aguest 1, 1989, quoted in Moslem, *Factionl Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 147
[610] *Keyhan*, November 26, 1989, quoted in Moslem, *Factionl Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran* p. 146

centers![611] As such, the Republic of Reconstruction was to shift from the statist economy to a free-market economy by merging the interests of the traditional mercantile middle class, "created on but not exclusive to the traditional bazaar," and the tiny conservative technocrats loyal to the Republic and led by President Rafsanjani. Given the regime's crisis of legitimacy, this new alliance was indeed a compensation for the absence of Khomeini's charismatic authority. In this coalition, writes Ansari, "Rafsanjani would govern with the interests of the merchant classes in mind, interests which coincided with his own commercial background, while the *bazaar* would finance the presidency."[612]

The merchants' interests were protected by the first government and yet the war, the domination of the populist-revolutionaries, and Khomeini's populism and revolutionary charisma were obstacles to the hegemony of the traditional merchants. However, in the second government the merchant class expanded the scope of the traditional trade in the oil, carpet, and pistachio industries. The state apparatus in general, and the revolutionary foundations in particular, were instrumental in consolidating mercantile capitalism. All powerful and parallel revolutionary-financial institutions run by the traditional-conservatives were exempted from either taxation or public inspection. They also received state subsidies and patronage, resulting in the "development of a two-tier economic system."[613] Such institutions as the Foundation of the Oppressed (*Bonyad-e Mostaz'afan*), which dominated some 40% of the Iranian economy, remained beyond the control of the public inquiry. As such, "Rafsanjani's 'free market' policies in reality

---

[611] The first was claimed by Ayatollah Azari-Qomi, *Ettela'at*, June 23, 1979. The second was argued by Ayatollah Hojjat, *Ettela'at*, June 22-23 1979, quoted in Moslem, *Factionl Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 105

[612] For Ansari, this state "can be characterized as a 'mercantile bourgeois republic.'" Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and* After (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), p. 244)

[613] Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921*, p. 245

meant a market dominated by mercantile interests not open to competition and ignorant of any notion of social justice."[614] Furthermore, given the ascendancy of the traditional-conservatives in the government, a highly restrictive bill passed by the Third *Majles* in order to punish all illegal-matchmaking merchants remained un-passed. The bill was to hamper the backbone of the conservatives and the bazarris who had gained enormous wealth during the war and were considered to be responsible for the economic crisis.[615] Moreover, given the lack of economic transparency and the regime's revolutionary reputation, no major foreign investment took place. According to Ansari, "the result for the economy was a populism purchased through the pursuit of loans and the printing of money, both of which proved to be inflationary."[616] In the end, unwilling to pursue political democratization and unable to complete economic reconstruction, President Rafsanjani, echoing the Shah's regime, tended to choose the safest way by focusing on social issues. He encouraged women to wear colourful veils, or the youth to practice temporary marriage. However, this strategy of social liberalization, among other economic and political issues, challenged the coalition of the traditional and pragmatic conservatives.

In short, there was a negative correlation between Iran's mercantile capitalist development and democratization. The ascendancy of political and cultural networks of patrimonialism, the absence of accountability and transparency, and the access of a small elite to state resources all strengthened traditional mercantilism. The domination of mercantile capitalism undermined the social and political forces of democracy – the new middle class, working class, and industrial capitalists. Rafsanjani's economic policies on

---

[614] Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921*, p. 246
[615] Moslem, *Factional Politics in post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 161
[616] Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921*, p. 246

privatization were very much appreciated by the traditional-conservatives and their bazaari allies. They were trying, as daily *Salam* argued, "to compensate for their lost profits, justifying their economic views by drawing on traditional interpretation of the *fiqh*, and, by giving priority to primary rulings over secondary ones, creating a pro-market conservative economic system."[617] In practice, this meant that "the bazaaris got rich through land speculation, hoarding, and manipulation of exchange rates."[618] In class terms, this group consisted of, but was not limited to, importers, forward purchasers (*salaf-khar*), wholesalers and wholesale dealers, middlemen, cargo dealers (*barbaran*), and warehouse owners who enjoyed an unofficial but extremely powerful network. As a critical journalist inside Iran observed, this group "never favoured a strong independent national economy and continued their traditional way of conducting commerce without yielding to supervision and inspection by the government;"[619] they were invisible from the outside but well-rooted inside the country and as such could "easily sabotage government regulations."[620] The lack of modern economic infrastructure and the quick-cash mentality of the bazaaris, coupled with their improper understanding of the modern economy, hindered the success of Rafsanjani's economic policies. In the early 1990's, the domination of the bazaar economy was so destructive that, in the words of one MP, "today, the daily income of a small trader [*kasebkar*] is more than the monthly salary of a government employee, and the one-day commission of a middleman or a retailer is more

---

[617] *Salam*, June 9, 1991, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 165
[618] *Bayan*, June-July, 1990, 37-41, quoted in Moslem, p. 165
[619] *Payam-e Emrooz*, fall 1994, quoted in Moslem, p. 189
[620] Ibid

than one year's income of one family."[621] In sum, the "import and sell" economy became a "widespread phenomenon leading to the 'rule of commerce over production.'"[622]

With the second cabinet in play in 1992, the animosity between Rafsanjani and the traditional-conservatives began to be revealed. The new cabinet and its economic policies were less inclined towards the interests of the bazaari, and more inclined towards the interests of modern technocrats. The traditional-conservatives, as an *Iran-e Farda* editorial suggested, were determined neither to lose their dominant position attained after the war, nor to forget how the Shah's industrial development in the 1960's jeopardised the interests of the commercial capitalist bazaaris. They favoured industrialisation as long as they themselves were in total control of financial and industrial development.[623] Because they relied on the traditional *fiqh* and the *velayat-e faqih*, they strongly opposed any efforts that would shift the balance of economic and political power from the traditional conservatives to others, no matter whether they belonged to the Khomeinists or even the modern conservative allies. It was within this context that Rafsanjani's taxation policy became a major cause of contention between the traditional and modern conservative Khomeinists.

In theory, the second government was seeking to "*demobilize* politics and society" and "to *rationalize* them in the service of economic reform." In reality, however, what appeared was not reform but a new commercial community of reconstructed elites on the Pahlavi model.[624] The marriage of mercantilism and patrimonialism or, to use Ali

---

[621] *Salam*, October 5, 1992, quoted from Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 189

[622] See Ezzatollah Sahabi, "*Iqtesad-e Bazari Ba'd az Jang*," [The Bazaari Economy after the War], pp. 18-22, quoted in Moslem, p. 166

[623] *Iran-e Farda*, Spring, 1993:23, quoted in Moslem, p. 195

[624] Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921*, 59

Shariati's phrase, "the *mullah*-merchant marriage" favoured not democratic forces, but a thousand new families.

### *2.1.3: The Post-Totalitarian State: The Hegemony of an Authoritarian Politics*

The first government was essentially a "one-man show" dictated by Ayatollah Khomeini.[625] Nonetheless, in the post-Khomeini era, with no charisma in politics, no threat from a foreign enemy, and growing domestic opposition, disagreements over socio-political issues divided the Khomeinist forces. The most important figure of the second government, then President Rafsanjani, distanced himself from the revolutionary-populists and made an alliance with the traditional-conservatives until the fifth *Majles* elections. Neither the new president nor the new *vali-ye faqih* Ayatollah Khamenei, agreed with the political radicalism or economic statism supported by the populist-revolutionaries. As such, the two leading characters of the second government were in agreement with the conservatives. But the populist-revolutionaries remained relatively strong during the first three years of Rafsanjani's government, managed to keep the majority of seats in the third *Majles*, and remained in control of revolutionary foundations such as the Martyr's Foundation and some Muslim militant student organizations. They opposed the reconstruction policy by supporting a statist economy and revolutionary policies both in domestic and foreign affaires. They referred to the constitution and to Khomeini's will to challenge the socio-economic policies of the second government. In a political maneuver, they pledged loyalty to the dissident Ayatollah Montazeri who had been dismissed from the office of the *velayat-e faqih* during the last months of Khomeini's life. The conservatives, in response, were determined to purge their

---

[625] Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 143

revolutionary rivals from power. The Guardian Council disqualified nearly all populist-revolutionary candidates from the 1990 election of the Assembly of Experts; the excuse was the inability of the candidates to pass written and oral tests in Islamic jurisprudence. More importantly, the conservatives pushed for a new interpretation of Article 99 of the Constitution, suggesting the authority of the Guardian Council be extended from supervising and observing elections to judging candidates' eligibility, and succeeded in making an "approval supervisory" or *nezarat-e estesvabi*. Ironically, the populist-revolutionary Khomeinists were treated in the same manner in which they had treated their opponents during the First government. Ayatollah Khazali, the outspoken conservative hard-liner, made it clear that "so long as we have the power, we will not allow such morons [*avazi*] to enter the *Majles* and we will spray them with DDT!!!"[626] In 1991, having amended the election law, the *Majles* also made absolute loyalty to the *vali-ye faqih* a necessary condition for running in future elections. In 1992, the fourth *Majles* election, nearly one-third of all the candidates and most populist-revolutionaries were disqualified on the grounds that they had failed to show their practical commitment to Islam and the Islamic Republic. Their defeat in the parliamentary election also had to do with their reputation of supporting discredited revolutionary policies.

With the revolutionary rivals absent in the fourth *Majles*, President Rafsanjani had to rely on conservatives who opposed any Western model of development in the economy. It was difficult when there was no agreement on policies. Rafsanjani and his supporters desired, at least in theory, a modern industrial-based economy integrated into the global economy by adopting World Bank structural adjustment policies. The traditional-conservatives persisted in maintaining the role of bazaari-merchants in the

---

[626] *Salam*, February 13, 1992, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 184

economy, and saw Rafsanjani's economic policy as equivalent to the economic policy of the Shah's regime in the 1970's. The tension inside the conservative camp escalated during Rafsanjani's second administration (1993-1997) when Rafsanjani's supporters, modern-pragmatic conservatives, established a series of modern markets (*Refah, Qods, Shahrvand*) and challenged the traditional bazaar economy. The fourth *Majles* controlled by the traditional conservatives opposed Rafsanjani's Five-Year Economic Plan intended for industrial development. They argued that Rafsanjani's economic policy would result in major foreign debts, inflation, corruption and the vulnerability of the poor.

The traditional conservatives, seeing themselves as the senior partner of the coalition, pushed forward their agenda. They wanted the replacement of the Islamic Republic with an Islamic State without elections, ruled exclusively by the *vali-ye faqih*. They first forced President Rafsanjani to replace Seyyed-Mohammad Khatami, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, whose cultural policy was somewhat relaxed in favour of the press, media and film industries. Khatami had challenged the traditional conservatives' ideal of a society where sports, music, films, and books are highly restricted or banned. In 1990, he established a "press jury" to provide the press with a relatively fair legal atmosphere. From 1988 to 1992 the number of journals and newspapers rose from 102 to 369. He also claimed that some 8000 books, a number three times more than that of pre-revolutionary Iran, were published during his ten-year tenure.[627] Similarly, Iran's "Voice and Vision Broadcasting" director, the then President's brother, Mohammad Hashemi-Rafsanjani, was forced to resign since he had begun to produce national shows and to air Western films that were not in accordance with the conservatives' cultural values.

---

[627] *Ettela'at*, February 7 and 26, 1991, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, p. 171

The complex reality of the post-revolutionary, post-charismatic Iran forced the modern-pragmatist conservatives – now organized in the Party of the Servants of Iran's Reconstruction (*Hezb-e Kargozaran-e Sazandegi-e Iran*) – and populist-revolutionaries to adjust to post-Khomeinist state and society. The *Kargozaran-e Sazand*agi began to openly discuss issues such as the role of civil society, human rights and the republican democratic legitimacy of the Islamic Republic.[628] Likewise, the populist revolutionaries came to set make new political alignment between themselves and the modern pragmatist conservatives to set Rafsanjani free from his dependence on traditional conservatives. They also changed their position on the role and relevance of the *velayat-e faqih*. In the post-Khomeini era the new *vali-ye faqih* was more inclined towards the conservatives, denying the populist-revolutionaries their choice of position in clerical institutions under the leadership of the *vali-ye faqih*. Hence, the appeal was made in defending Republican institutions and the people. Republicanism was a tactical move to prevent the rival conservatives from seizing control of all political institutions.

By 1995 the traditional-conservatives had successfully marginalized the populist-revolutionaries, entangled the modern-pragmatist conservatives, enjoyed the full support of the *vali-ye faqih*, and seemed certain to monopolize power. But Rafsanjani's alliance with populist-revolutionaries in the fifth *Majles* elections changed the future scenario. Faced with the threat posed by the conservatives and forced by changing socio-political realities, the two factions emerged as reformists. They shared the idea that a limited degree of socio-political freedom is necessary. They agreed on the working of a modern industrial economy, while disagreeing over state initiatives and the leading role of the

---

[628] See articles in *Hamshahri* and *Bahman*; their editors were respectively two key members of Kargozarn, Karbaschi and Mohajerani. *Hamshahri*, February 19 and 22 1996; *Bahman*, February 3, 1996.

private sector. Ironically, in the mid-1990's it was not the revolutionaries but the traditional-conservatives who attacked Rafsanjani's initiatives for establishing relations with the United States.

The last and the most significant challenge during the second government was the 1997 presidential election. The modern-pragmatist conservatives proposed a constitutional amendment, making a third-term presidency for Rafsanjani possible. However, the initiative was rejected. Neither the revolutionary-populists nor the hardliner traditional-conservatives wanted Rafsanjani to run for the third-term presidency. The former rejected this proposal as it required amending the constitution and risking the democratic and Republican features of the constitution. The latter disliked the idea, as they planned to capture the office of presidency and turn the Islamic Republic into a fully mercantilist-clerical state devoid of any Republican element.

With Rafsanjani out of the presidential candidacy, the Servants of Construction turned to the popular-revolutionaries, setting the stage for a coalition which would bring the financial support of businessmen and technocrats and the political support of students, women, and intellectuals. The revolutionaries nominated Mire-Hossein Musavi, Iran's last and relatively popular Prime Minister who had served in the First government. However, Musavi refused. The reformist coalition then turned to Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, the former Minister of Culture and head of the National Library.

Khatami was an unlikely choice for a number of reasons: first, the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei and conservative hardliners did not take Khatami seriously, and his candidacy was viewed as harmless. Secondly, for Rafsanjani and the Servants of Construction, Khatami was a moderate, not a leftist revolutionary candidate; he had served under

President Rafsanjani and was familiar with both his ideas and the interests of the technocrats. For the populist-revolutionaries, Khatami was a loyal member of the Militant Clerics Association, the major clerical organization of revolutionaries controlled by Mehdi Karrubi and Mosavi-Khoeiniha. All factions believed that Khatami's nomination could only increase the electoral participation by some ten per cent, not enough to win the election. But the predictions of all politicians were proved wrong when Iranian society acted differently.

## 3. The Dynamics of Civil Society in the Second Government

"Civil society," Larry Diamond argues, "is an intermediate entity, standing between the private sphere and the state."[629] This space between the state and the individual is filled by social groups who, if powerful enough, may enjoy the autonomy to pursue their own activities and hold the state responsible and accountable. The composition of forces and thus the function of civil societies are different in each and every society. For example, in some Latin American countries civil society acted in the form of popular social organizations and strong social movements, whereas in some East European cases the intellectual community and, to a lesser degree, a progressive middle class, were conducive to democratization. In post-revolutionary Iran, as in Eastern Europe, the intellectual community was effective in dismantling the dominant authoritarian discourse. Unlike in the Latin American case, however, Iran has been short of strong, organized, and effective social movements; and yet the youth and women, however unorganized, have played a significant part in the movement. Thus, the dynamics of Iran's civil society, or the societal factor, will be discussed on both intellectual and structural levels.

---

[629] Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society Towards Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy*, (1994) 5, 3, p. 5.

## 3.1. The societal factor: the intellectual level

Having been concerned at the leader's lack of charismatic authority, the traditional-conservatives replaced the revolutionary charismatic legitimacy with an absolutist version of the *velayat-e faqih*. They were speaking about "melting into the *velayat*" (*zob-e dar velayat*), suggesting a complete and full obedience to the *faqih*. The dissident intellectuals, in contrast, began dismantling the intellectual and theological justifications introduced by the ruling elites, challenging the political taboos of the Islamic Republic. The first and foremost taboo was obviously the doctrine of *velayat-e faqih*. As O'Donnell and Schmitter argue "exemplary individuals" and "common ideals" contribute to fostering democratic transition when such individuals test the regime-imposed boundaries. This "leads to mutual discoveries of common ideals, which acquire enormous political significance just because they are articulated publicly."[630] Among others, Abdolkarim Soroush, an influential Muslim reformist, and Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari, a leading liberal cleric, posed serious and substantial philosophical challenges to the ideological foundations of *Khomeinism*.

Abdolkarim Soroush, a leading lay-religious intellectual, was born in 1945 in southern Tehran, studied at Islamic Alavi school, and pursued the study of Islamic law after he met Ayatollah Khomeini in 1963. He received a masters degree in analytical chemistry and doctoral degree in history and philosophy of science at the University of London, then returned to Iran after the revolution and served as Ayatollah Khomeini's representative at the Cultural Revolution Institute to Islamize the university curriculum, later resigning in 1984. After that, Soroush, with his journal *Kiyan*, began to challenge

---

[630] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore and Washington, D.C: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 49

the intellectual foundations of the ruling clerical authority. Given his close connection with the populist-revolutionaries, Soroush was relatively successful in making *Kiyan* a platform for individuals such as Saeed Hajarian and Akbar Ganji who emerged as two leading reformists in the late 1990's.

Soroush challenged authoritarian religious thinking.[631] He echoed Shariati's ideas that clerics, like other "professional groups," hold a corporate identity, "a collective identity and shared interest," and thus possess no divine authority.[632] Soroush also challenged the notion of "religious government" by suggesting that anything "that has its own prior essence...can no longer be considered intrinsically religious, because one thing cannot have two intrinsic natures." Put simply, Soroush observed, "for example, 'water' has its own structure.... For this reason, we do not have religious water and non-religious water ... or religious and non-religious wine. The same applies to justice ... knowledge ... and the like. Similarly, we cannot have an intrinsically religious government." And yet, he argued, because "the government follows society," then "if society is religious, the government also takes on a religious hue."[633] Put simply, because religion and politics are positively correlated, "the least we can say in this respect is that religiosity or the lack thereof does not enter the essence of government. However, as an external reality,

---

[631] It is important to note that Soroush, appointed by Ayatollah Khomeini, was involved in the so-called Cultural Revolution and purging of intellectuals in the early years of the post-revolutionary politics.

[632] See "Soroush on Freedom of Clergy," *Kiyan* (April-May 1995), as translated in FBIS-NES-95-241-S, 15 December 1995, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 205

[633] "Soroush, on Meaning and Foundation of Secularism," *Kiyan* (August-September 1995), FBIS-NES-96-022-S, 1 February 1996, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 209. It is important to note that this argument, in my view, should not lead us to ignore the principle of the separation of religious institutions from state. There is no society which is homogenous, and no religion is homogenous that all of its followers have the same understanding of it.

government is subordinated to society and constitutes one of its forms of organization. If a society is religious, its government too will take on a religious hue."[634]

Soroush made it clear that religion is not confined to its formal interpreters. Islam is larger than the *ulama*'s clerical Islam and richer than the *fiqh*, or jurisprudence. For Soroush, "the Idea of Democratic Religious Government" would shift the centre of power from the *velayat-e faqih* to civil society, and would transform the religious oligarchy into a democratic, and yet religious politics.[635] For Soroush, "religious despotism is most intransigent because a religious despot views his rule as not only his right but his duty. Only a religious democracy that secures and shelters faith can be secure and sheltered from such self-righteous and anti-religious rule."[636] A powerful critic from within, Soroush boldly challenged the religious claims of the political establishment, arguing that "a rule that is not just is not religious,"[637] that "religion needs to be right not only logically but also ethically."[638] "We Iranian Muslims," Soroush argued, "are the inheritors and carriers of three cultures at once. As long as we ignore our links with the elements in our triple cultural heritage and our cultural geography, constructive social and cultural action will elude us....The three cultures that form our common heritage are of national, religious, and Western origins."[639] However, one could argue that the post-revolutionary state has sacrificed our national and Western origins at the cost of religious clericalism, putting an enormous burden on religion. In Soroush's words,

---

[634] Soroush, "The Sense and Essence of Secularism," in M. Sadri and M. Sadri, trans. and eds., *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 61.

[635] Soroush, "The Idea of Democratic Religious Government," in M. Sadri and M. Sadri, trans. and eds., *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush*, pp. 127-28.

[636] Soroush, "Tolerance and Governance," in M. Sadri and M. Sadri, trans. and eds., *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush*, p. 155.

[637] Ibid, p. 132

[638] Soroush, "The Idea of Democratic Religious Government," pp. 128

[639] Ibid, pp. 127-28

The greatest pathology of religion I have noticed after the revolution is that it has become plump, even swollen. Many claims have been made in the name of religion and many burdens are put on its shoulders. It is neither possible nor desirable for religion, given its ultimate mission, to carry such a burden. This means purifying religion, making it lighter and more buoyant, in other words, rending religion more slender by sifting, whittling away, erasing the superfluous layers off the face of religiosity.[640]

Similarly, Mojtahed-Shabestrai insisted that the "institution of *velayat-e faqih* is a purely political rather than religious one. Our constitution…juxtaposes divine rights and the rights of the citizens. This mix…is the source of many of our problems. We must escape from this contradiction by adapting to the exigencies of modernity."[641] The rule of the *vali-ye faqih* is not divine and thus has to be subjected to democratic procedures. By the same token, a less absolutist version of the *velayat-e faqih* came from within the religious establishment. This was mainly represented by dissenting Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri and his disciples, such as Mohsen Kadivar, and to a lesser degree Hassan Yusefi-Eshkevari. Ayatollah Montazeri came with a more accountable interpretation of the *velayat-e faqih*, suggesting that *velayat-e faqih* "does not mean that the leader is free to do whatever he wants without accountability."[642] The *vali-ye faqih* "we envisaged in the constitution," he argued, "has his duties and responsibilities clearly defined. His main responsibility is to supervise [and] stop dealing with religious matters and content yourself to supervise."[643] For Mohsen Kadivar, the "central question that the clergy faces today is whether it can preserve its independence…in the face of an Islamic state, since it does not want to fall victim to the fate of the Marxist parties of the former communist

---

[640] Abdolkarim Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam*, trans. M. Sadri and M. Sadri, p. 21
[641] Eric Rouleau, "En Iran, Islam Contre Islam," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1999, reported in <www. Monde-diplomatique.fr/1999/06rouleau/12105.html'>, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 238
[642] Montazeri on State's Road to Destruction," London *Keyhan*, 10 October 1994, EBIS-NES-94-231, 10 October 1994, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 215
[643] "Montazeri's Speech in Keyhan," 4 December 1997, reported in <http://eurasianews.com/iran/montadres.html>, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 238

states."[644] Kadivar boldly argued that such a political version of the *velayat-e faqih* existed neither in the Koran, nor in the Prophet's nor the Shiite Imam's traditions.[645] Yusefi-Eshkevari, too, argued that "the religious source of imitation and political leadership" have to be separated, not "concentrated in one person."[646] In an interview with *Hamshahri* daily, Mehdi Haeri-Yazdi, the respected son of the highly influential late Grand Ayatollah Haeri-Yazdi, challenged the dominant version of the absolute *velayat-e faqih*. "Governance [*hokumat*]," he argued, "is not more than deputyship [*vekalat*] and any time you feel that your deputy has committed treachery, you replace him....The kind of true democratic Islamic government that I construe is deputyship....After the Hijra of the Prophet from Mecca to Madina, the people of Madina 'elected' him as the head of the state."[647] According to Brumberg, "this neotraditionalist defence of religious pluralism was meant to save religion by taking it out of the hands of ruling clerical elite."[648]

In the context of such reform opinions in the early 1990's, Seyyed Mohammad Khatami's ideas were hardly considered radical. But in the late 1990's his ideas became significant and substantial in shaping the politics of the Third government. For this reason, a quick review of his ideas is useful. Mohammad Khatami, the first son of

---

[644] Eric Rouleau, "La Republique Islamique d'iran Confrontee a la Societe Civile," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1995, <http/www.mondediplomatique.fr/1995/06/rouleau/1542.html>, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 238

[645] See Mohsen Kadivar, *Andisheh-ye Siyasi dar Islam* [*Political Thought in Islam*], vols. 1-2 (Tehran: Nay Publications, 1998).

[646] "Independence of Religious Authority, a Spiritual and National Need," *Iran-e Farda*, no 16 (February 1995): 64-66, <www. Netiran.com/htdocs/clippings/social/950200XXSO01.html>, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 215

[647] *Hamshahri*, July 6, 1995, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Polities*, p. 229

[648] Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 215; the arguments made by Ayatollah Montazeri and Yusefi-Eshkevari were in response to the traditional conservatives' (failed) attempt at re-fusion of the position of *marj'a* and that of the *vali-ye faqih*, which had been constitutionally separated in the 1989 Constitution. The traditional conservatives were quick to make the death of grand ayatollah Ali Araki, one of the few living Grand Ayatollahs, an opportunity to make Khamenei the absolute religious as well as political leader. Given the growing resistance coming from both the religious intellectuals and the clerics, the conservatives' project failed.

Ayatollah Rohollah Khatami of Yazd, was born in 1943 and pursued his religious studies at Qom where he became one of Khomeini's disciples. He received bachelor's and master degrees in philosophy from Esfahan and Tehran university respectively, and lived in Hamburg where he served as a director of the Islamic centre, learning German and some English while living there from 1978 to 1980. On returning to Iran he gradually entered the ruling power structure, by serving as a director of *Keyhan* Publishing Centre in 1980, and then as a Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance under both Prime Minster Musavi and President Hashemi-Rafsanjai for a decade (1982-1992). When forced to resign by conservatives he left the government, but was later appointed as President Rafsanjani's cultural advisor and the head of Iran's National Library where he stayed until May 1997.

From 1992 to 1997, remaining loyal to the legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini, Khatami developed his own ideas by calling upon the clerical authorities to grasp the new world and its requirements. In his first book, *Fear of the Wave*, (*Bim-e Mowj*), he argued that a "new vision", not "dogma", will ensure the future success of Islamic society and state. But, "until the clergy are active in every sphere, they will not realize that religious authority and knowledge are not enough."[649] Echoing Soroush's argument, he emphasised that Muslims need learning from the West. The conservatives "who cannot separate the political West from the non-political West are acting against the interests of the nation."[650] The non-political West, he argues, "rests on the idea of 'liberty' or 'freedom'...the most cherished values for humans of all ages."[651] The non-political West, too, holds both positive and negative aspects. As such, "a true human being who believes and has accepted Islam cannot be a liberal [because] liberalism is based on man's wants,

---

[649] Mohammad Khatami, *Bim-e Mowj*, pp. 40-42, 48, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 199
[650] Ibid, p. 19
[651] Ibid, p.17

wishes, and his materialistic needs" while Islam is about the "spiritual and ethical improvement of man."[652] The challenge is to "utilize [the] positive scientific, technological, and social accomplishments" of the West, while keeping distance from isolation and negation. This can be done through "dialogue among civilizations and culture, with people of the intellect taking a pivotal role."[653] For Khatami, not only is the wholesale negation of the West incorrect, but "we have no choice but to correctly and comprehensively understand the West."[654] Hence, the Islamic Republic's "cultural strategy," Khatami argued, must avoid "confronting the opponents in the name of rejecting the West and defending religion;"[655] instead, it should encourage "contact and communications with different, sometimes opposing views, to be able to equip itself with a more powerful, attractive thought than that of the opponent."[656] In his second book, *From the World of the City to the City of the World,* (*Az Donya-ye Shahr ta Shahr-e Donya*), Khatami implicitly questioned the dominant version of the *velayat-e faqih* and also gave a selective credit to liberal democracy. "In the new age of political thought, what has received the approval of modern men is the idea that there is no 'superior will' beyond the rational subjectivity and the will of humans, and that the only source of civil society is the existence of agreements….In other words, consensus and a social contract are the real source of the 'superior will' and civil society."[657]

---

[652] "Khatami Interviewed on Elections," *Jomhuri-ye Islami,* 25 February 1997, FBIS-NES-97-047, 25 February 1997, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini,* p. 228

[653] Statement by Seyyed Mohammad Khatami," President's Opening Address to the OIC General Session," <www. Persia.org/khatami/khatami03.html>, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini,* p. 223

[654] Mohammad Khatami, *Bim-e Mowj,* p.19, quoted in Brumberg, p. 200

[655] Ibid, 17

[656] Ibid, pp. 47-48

[657] Seyyed Mohamd Khatami, *Az Donya-ye Shahr ta Shahr-e Donya* (Tehran: Nay Press, 1994), p. 35, quoted in Mohsen Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in John Esposito and R.K. Ramazani, eds., *Iran at the Crossroads* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 38

In addition to intellectuals, some journals also played a significant role in challenging the absolute rule of the *vali-ye faqih*. The daily *Salam* argued that the *velayat-e faqih* has never been a part and parcel of religion, and it has been the subject of debates and contention among the Shiite clergy.[658] "The absolute guardianship which the Imam spoke of is the authority of the Islamic government, not the authority of a single person... The guardianship of the religious jurist protects the rules of the regime in the same way that the place of the people in the regime is a rule."[659] Ayatollah Mohammad Mosavi-Khoeiniha, the managing director of *Salam*, argued that the boundaries of the authority of "the *velayat* are subject to the views and decisions of the people. If the people delegate all of this right ...to one individual...then [he]...has absolute *velayat*. [But] if the people have stipulated a structure for the nation's political and executive system, have distributed power based on this structure, have provided bodies and responsibilities for managing the country's affairs, then...the *velayat* does not belong to an individual but rather to the entire Islamic government."[660]

The traditional-conservatives fought back. Soroush, following Ayatollah Khamenei's fiery lectures against the enemies of the *velayat-e faqih*, was forced to temporarily leave the country. The office of the bi-monthly *Kiyan* was attacked because it had published Soroush's articles. In October 1994, 134 members of Iran's Writers' Association, a secular intellectual society, issued an open letter expressing their disappointment with the ongoing violation of human and civil rights, and to express their serious concerns about the regime's policy and practice of humiliation and threats against

---

[658] *Salam*, July 24, 1995, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 230
[659] Behzad Nabavi, "Behzad Nabavi, Morteza nabavi Attended Tehran University Roundtable," *Salam*, 8 February 1997, FBIS-NES-97 061, 8 February 1997, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 225
[660] "*Salam* Addresses Position of Vice Regency," *Salam*, 24 July 1995, p. 1, FBIS-NES-950216, 8 November 1995, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 216

writers. In the following month, one of the signatories, the writer Saidi-Sirjani died in jail under suspicious circumstances, and some other intellectuals were threatened by the Ministry of Intelligence. Mostafa Mir-Salim, the conservative Minister of Culture, argued that "under the press law, there is freedom of the press. But some do not have the necessary discernment [sho'ur] to know what to do with this freedom and how far to go with it."[661] The editor-in-chief of the daily Salam, Abbas Abdi, was tried and jailed for eight months. The influential journals, Iran-Farda, Bahman, Payam-e Daneshju, Aineh-y e Andisheh, Havades, Gardun, and Jahan-e Islam daily were closed down. Iran-Farda represented the left wing of Bazargan's Iran's Freedom Movement and pro-Shariati's intellectuals, and was critical of clerical rule. From its inception in the early 1990's until its closure in 2000, Iran-e Farda was the country's most widely read political journal.[662]

And yet despite all repressive attempts, the intellectuals, either in person or press, succeeded in communicating with civil society. They, Brumberg observes, "inspired a mass reform movement linking three generations; prominent 'fathers of the revolution,' most critically Ayatollah Montazeri; 'children of the revolution,' many of whom came from the Islamic Left as well as from liberal-nationalist circles; and finally 'grandchildren of the revolution,' the new generation of high school and university students who constituted the movement's mass base."[663]

### 3.2. The societal factor: the structural level

According to Theda Skocpol, "what is unique to social revolution is that the basic change in social structure and in political structure occurs together in a mutually

---

[661] Bahman, February 6, 1996, quoted in Moslem, Factional Politics, p. 223
[662] Adineh 106 (Tehran: December 1995), p. 47
[663] Brumberg, Reinventing Khomeini, p. 234

reinforcing fashion."[664] The traditional-conservatives failed to grasp the dialectics and dynamism of socio-political change. They overestimated the impact of political change and significantly underestimated societal transformation in post-revolutionary Iran. Iran in the mid-1990's was experiencing a growing social and ideological disenchantment. For conservatives, the harsh truth to accept was a growing gap between their socio-cultural clerical values and those of the youth, the post-revolutionary generation. The state failed to create the man or the society Ayatollah Khomeini had envisioned. The dominant ideology of *Khomeinism* was no longer able to reach the youth, even though they had been raised and educated under the Islamic Republic. They were socio-culturally disenchanted, politically disappointed, and economically dissatisfied. Why did this happen? The following structural factors may explain the social transformation in post-revolutionary Iran.

The first government (1979-1989) was the foundation for the future structural changes in post-Khomeini Iran. In the mid-1980's, the population growth rate was 3.9 percent, double the world average. From 1980 to 1990, the population grew from 39 million to 56 million, with the youth numbering nearly 30 million.[665] The first post-revolutionary government dismantled family planning, which was perceived as the Shah's legacy. The state's policy also encouraged fertility by lowering the legal age of marriage to fifteen for boys and thirteen for girls. The result was that about half of the country's population was born after the revolution, and to this generation Ayatollah Khomeini and the 1979 Revolution belonged to history.

---

[664] Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comprehensive Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.4-5
[665] Ali Banuazizi, "Faltering Legitimacy: The Ruling Clerics and Civil Society in Iran," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 8, no. 4(1995): 571

Similarly, under the first government Iran experienced rapid urbanization. In the mid-1980's sixty percent of the population lived in cities, and Tehran's population nearly doubled from four million in 1980 to seven million in 1990.[666] The expansion of higher education was another structural factor pushing change. The male literacy rate rose from 54 percent in 1989 to 66 percent in 1991, while women's rose from 30 percent to 54 percent in the same period.[667] Likewise, the departure of many men to fight in the war brought an urgent need for the employment of women in both public and private sectors. By the mid-1980's the percentage of female employment was at thirty percent, exceeding the pre-revolutionary level. Women also constituted forty percent of all graduates.

Moreover, the regime's Cultural Revolution was far from successful. A decade after the reopening of the universities in 1982, despite the regime's policy of affirmative action to secure admissions from the martyrs' family, the university students were alienated from the dominant clerical culture. The university instructors and the curricula remained as in the pre-revolutionary period, even after the strict policy of Islamization following the revolution. The regime had no choice but to retain many university instructors educated in the West, given the shortage of qualified university instructors.

Faced with such harsh realities conservative hardliners reacted rigidly. The Islamic Coalition Party (Mo'talefeh-ye Islami), a highly organized and influential party of traditional-conservatives, set the agenda for the cultural policy of the second government. They launched a campaign against Western cultural invasion (Tahajom-e Farhangi-e Gharb) whose victims, they argued, were youth and women. The National Radio and

---

[666] Kaveh Ehsani, "Municipal Matters: The Urbanization of Consciousness and Political Change in Tehran," Middle East Report, no. 212 (fall 1999): 22-27

[667] "Illiteracy rate dropped by 20 percent since 1979" Islamic Republic News Agency, 14 September 1993, in <netiran.com/htdocs/dailynews/archives/IRNA/1993/93091414RGGO7.html>, quoted in Brumberg,, Reinventing Khomeini, p. 188

Television, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Interior, among other para-statal organizations, began to react against women's improper veiling and youth's inappropriate social behaviours. They empowered the mosque-*Basij* axis to impose the clerical moral code, preventing the so-called Western cultural invasion. The *Basiji* militia turned into cultural combatants whose targets were youth and women. In 1992, Ayatollah Khamenei appointed Ayatollah Jannati as Tehran's Friday prayer Imam, allowing him to play the role the conservative hardliners wished. In 1993, Ayatollah Jannati was appointed as the first director of a newly established organization called the Headquarters for the Vivification of Promoting Virtue and Preventing Vice. In all universities, the *vali-ye faqih's* representatives sought to control student associations and reorient the cultural atmosphere. These efforts, however, were ineffective because they aimed to turn back the clock of cultural life.

Civil society managed to keep at bay the repressive intentions of the state. Youth and women brought the public sphere into their private lives by watching forbidden shows and foreign satellites, by meeting and communicating with each other, and by openly discussing socio-political taboos. More importantly, they even managed to create a relatively open space in the public sphere by successfully resisting the clerical cultural code and insisting on their *social*, if not political, rights. Women continued to challenge the state's gender politics by consistently resisting the clerical indoctrination and re-socialization. "*Hejab*," as Haideh Moghissi put it, became "a haunting concern for the Islamic Republic" and thus "the symbol of women's defiance and resistance."[668] The independent intellectuals managed to continue publishing some journals such as *Iran-*

---

[668] Haideh Moghissi, "Troubled Relationships: Women, nationalism, and the Left movement in Iran," p. 225

*Farda*, *Goftego*, and *Kiyan*. The film industry and the arts in general, in spite of all the censorship, managed to implicitly expose ideas fundamentally foreign to the clerical cultural codes, creating a relatively active and energetic civil society. As such, the social institutions were far from mere instruments of the state, given the existence of a limited and restricted public space.

At this time, Iran's growing middle class remained economically dissatisfied. The monthly income of an average Iranian family was 620,000 Rials during 1996-1997, while the poverty line was set at 1,000,000 Rials.[669] Middle class families were using their savings, selling off their assets, and engaging in the underground economy. In the mid-1990's, Iran was facing the economic consequence of an eight-year war. A huge number of war veterans returned to the urban centres looking for jobs as the growing number of urban poor and ever increasing number of urban youth put the state in a hard position. A sharp decline in oil prices, a rapid rise in population, ineffective economic plans,[670] and systemic corruption, writes Abrahamian, "generated a host of economic problems: unemployment, inflation, foreign-exchange crises, lack of investments, shortages of schools and housing, flight of capital and professionals, and continued influx of peasants into urban slums."[671] In the early and mid-1990's a series of demonstrations and unrest in Tehran, Shiraz, and Mashhad signalled a deep crisis in both the legitimacy and the efficiency of the Khomeinist state.

Mohammad Khatami, unlike his conservative counterpart, addressed and acknowledged the crisis. He succeeded in communicating with various groups in civil

---

[669] Hossein Azimi, *Iran-e Emrooz*, 1378/1999, pp. 15-28.

[670] Due to mis-management and lack of funds, the second government left a substantial number of industrial projects – some 11,500 – uncompleted; see BBC SWB MEW/0543 WME/5, 23 June 1998; Iranian TV, 18 June 1998, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam, and Democracy*, p. 174

[671] Abrahamian, *Empire Strikes back*, pp. 116-17

society, particularly with four social groups which received his message for change and formed the structural base of the reform movement. The first group was youth. With some two-thirds of the population under the age of twenty-five, 50 percent below the age of 20 and 70 percent below the age of 30, and no personal memory of monarchy or revolution, youth and students voted for Khatami for greater socio-cultural opening and economic opportunity. In an interview with a widely circulated reformist daily, Khatami argued that he was aware that the most critical issue was the "physical, mental and spiritual needs" of the young, who need to "enjoy the present."[672] For Khatami, the youth segment was "not an enigma but an advantage."[673] He argued that "rather than estranging them, we must involve the young in politics, economics, and the affairs of the country."[674] Khatami chose to deliver his first election speech to the largest student organisation, the Office for the Fostering of Unity (*Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*). The Union of Islamic Associations of University Students, led by Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, welcomed Khatami's candidacy. Interestingly, even the young generation of the bazaari, unlike the formal establishment of the bazaar, was becoming more open to global integration and less antagonistic towards reform; they too supported Khatami. The second group were women; they voted for Khatami to express their wishes for greater change in political, legal, and educational spheres to improve and expand women's rights. Given Khatami's reputation for tolerance and a limited-degree of pluralism during his short-ministerial tenure, the third group of intellectuals, including middle class civil servants, supported Khatami. For the intellectuals, he was an educated, open-minded cleric who

---

[672] "Khatami Interviewed on Need to Address Youth Problems," *Hamshahri*, 6 March 1997, FBIS-NES-97-067, 8 March 1997, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 224
[673] *Salam*, April 27, 1997, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 247
[674] Ibid

was forced to resign from the Ministry of Culture. The fourth group that voted for Khatami was made up of a broad category of the poor, who saw in Khatami a desire to bring about greater social justice.[675]

Khatami became the candidate for change, and received the people's protest vote. "Until right before 1997," the chief advisor to President Khatami Saeed Hajarian put it, "the rate of participation in the elections was 40 percent; the electoral campaign and the conservatives' attack against Khatami turned the attention of the population – the discontented silent majority – toward Khatami. Part of the remaining 60 percent entered the electoral arena in order to peacefully declare its opposition and to give an ultimatum to those holding power."[676] Given the prevalence of corruption and alienation in society, Khatami's reputation for his clean financial record, his simple and popular style of campaigning, and his discourse on the rule of law and the promotion of civil society appealed to various sections of society, making him a "Cinderella candidate"[677] and eventually an "accidental president"[678] of the Islamic Republic.

## 4. Conclusion

The hegemony of *Khomeinism* under the politics of the second government resulted in a number of unintended consequences. It routinized the revolutionary

---

[675] Farhad Kazemi, "The Precarious Revolution," pp. 90-91.

[676] E. Baqi, interview with S. Hajarian, Fath (Tehran), 3 April 2000; qouted in Ladan Boroumand and Roya Boroumand, "Is Iran Democratizaing? Reform at the Impasse," in L. Diamond, M. Plattner, and D. Brumberg, Islam and Democracy in the Middle East, p. 142.

[677] Mohsen M. Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in Esposito and Ramazani, eds., Iran at the Crossroads, p. 29.

[678] Shaul Bakhash, "Iran's Remarkable Election," in Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg eds., Islam and Democracy in the Middle East (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 119. It is worth mentioning that the outcome of all post-revolutionary presidential elections (1981, 1985, 1989, and 1993), except for the first one in 1980, was predetermined. The outcome of the 1997 presidential election was uncertain due to the level of elites' factional politics, dynamics of civil society, and the personality of Khatami himself.

charisma, institutionalized the office of the *velayat-e faqih,* and established a post-charismatic, post-war and post-totalitarian politics. The politics of "Reconstruction" (*Sazandegi*) in the second government resembled a conservative revolution or, to use Barrington Moore's analytical concept, a "revolution from above."[679] It failed both to reconcile a conservative, neo-patrimonial politics with attempts at economic modernization, and to bridge the gap between clerical politics and the changing civil society. The priority of economic development over political development was far from a success. The politics of *Sazandegi* weakened the social base of the regime, de-legitimized its political rule, and eventually resulted in some significant socio-political changes. Like the Shah's regime, the second government of the Republic failed in economic development, and was forced to open up public space and allow a limited degree of socio-political liberalization. Given the absence of an authoritative revolutionary charisma, the second government revealed the inner tension between the authoritarian and the democratic tendencies in Iran's socio-political structure, and between the clerical and the Republican components of the Khomeinist state. This exploded in social unrest and escalated elite factionalism. This time, however, public grievances took the shape of reform, not revolution. The nature of the two states and the dynamism of civil society played a significant part in the outcomes. The Pahlavi dynasty was a sultanistic regime with no factional politics, while the Islamic Republic has remained an autocratic regime with intense factional politics.

By the late 1990's the intensity of Iran's factional politics was a fact, providing much opportunity for the unexpected victory of the reformist presidential candidate,

---

[679] See Barrington Jr. Moore, *Social origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Press, 1966).

Mohammad Khatami. The inner tensions of the Khomeinist state were resolved only temporarily when over twenty million people cast their vote against the candidate of the establishment. The election of Mohammad Khatami on 23 May, 1997, put an abrupt end to the second government and brought a new phase in the life of the Khomeinist state. It gave birth to the reformist government, and brought momentum to the reform movement. Khatami's moment, however, was a lost opportunity. This will be examined in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Khatami's Moment: The Failure of "*Khomeinism* with a Human Face"?

### 1. Introduction

Social movements are not involuntarily created by structural factors; they are, Charles Tilly argues, initiated only when favourable opportunities are taken by political or social actors.[680] Both the 1979 Revolution and the 1997 May Movement were created by popular social movements. Unlike the 1979 Revolution, in the 1997 reform movement the resurrection of civil society was accompanied by the elite factional politics. The civil society intended socio-political change, while the regime's reformists initiated a process of liberalization to secure the survival and legitimacy of the state. In other words, the populace and political elites subscribed to different levels of reform.

As history suggests there is always more than one potential outcome to the efforts of any social movement, since the potential outcome depends on the actors' strategic decisions and socio-political constraints. In the post-Khomeini period, the forces of Iranian civil society created a unique momentum for a democratic transition and brought Khatami's reformist government (1997-2005) to power. The reformist government, however, failed to meet the societal demands. The purpose of this chapter is to examine why Khatami's moment was lost. To what extent were strategic considerations and to what degree were socio-political content involved in the outcome? How much was Khatami able to meet the societal demands, and how much was his agency bound by the shadow of *Khomeinism*?

---

[680] See Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978)

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first examines the reform movement and the reformists in power in three critical stages. The purpose of this section is to explain how the tension between, to borrow Linz's and Stepan's phrases, Iran's "civil society initiation" and the "regime-controlled transition"[681] shaped the fate and future of Khatami's reformist government. The second part examines why Khatami's reformist government failed to meet the societal demands. Why did the uncertain victory of Khatami in the 1997 presidential elections never institutionalize "uncertainty" in the political process?[682] This chapter suggests that Khatami's strategic misjudgements contributed to this loss, and yet it was not purely this strategy that brought about a reversal. The reformist government failed because it was bound by the institutional and intellectual legacy of *Khomeinism*. Institutionally, the Khomeinist state provided the lion's share of power to the office of the *velayat-e faqih,* and put the Republican institutions controlled by the reformists in a weaker position. Intellectually, Khatami's reformist discourse was heavily influenced by the intellectual foundation of *Khomeinism*, evident in Khatami's discourses of Islamic constitutionalism, Islamic civil society, and Islamic democracy. After all, Khatami and other reformists were children of the Islamic Republic and never attempted to challenge the legacy of the founding father of the Republic. The chapter also examines the position of socio-political classes and the impact of transnational factors on this episode. The chapter concludes that the potentiality for a transition to democracy was available. The shadow of *Khomeinism* could have been

---

[681]Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 71-72.

[682] Adam Przeworski argues that democracy institutionalizes "uncertainty." See Adam Przeworski, "The Games of Transition," in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and Samuel Valenzuela eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992)

overcome if the reformists had taken the favourable opportunity provided by the active civil society. The fall of the reformist government and the reversal in reform was due to the failure of human agency.

## 2. Khatami's Moment: Liberalization without Democratization

According to Linz and Stepan, democratization and liberalization are two different, though not mutually exclusive, concepts. "Democratization entails liberalization" and "requires open contestation over the right to win control of the government, and this in turn requires free competitive elections, the results of which determine who governs." Liberalization, however, "may entail a mix of policy and social changes, such as less censorship of the media, somewhat greater space for the organization of autonomous working-class...the releasing of most political prisoners, the return of exiles...and most important, the toleration of opposition."[683] Likewise, O'Donnell and Schmitter argue that "democratization refers to the processes whereby the rules and procedures of citizenship are either applied to political institutions previously governed by other principles," or "expanded to include persons not previously enjoying such rights and obligations," or "extended to cover issues and institutions not previously subject to citizen participation."[684] In liberalization, however, the scope and scale of extended rights are limited. Because liberalization "is indicative of the beginning of the transition," it refers only to "the process of making effective certain rights that protect both individuals and social groups from arbitrary or illegal acts committed by the state or

---

[683] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p.3

[684] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, "Defining Some Concepts," in Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, Schmitter *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 8.

third parties."[685] Like all softliners, the Iranian reformists initiated liberalization in an effort to legitimize the state. But unlike most cases, they minimized the role of civil society. The reformists' plan for a controlled transition required a powerless civil society since they believed that if mobilized it might lead to the collapse of the entire political system. This strategy turned Khatami's moment, to use Linz and Stepan's phrases, into a period of "liberalization without democratization."[686] It replaced the reformist government with an autocratic government and brought about a reversal for the democratic reform movement.

Mohammad Khatami remained in power for two consecutive presidential terms (1997-2001 and 2001-2005). These eight years can be divided into three critical phases. In the first phase (1997-2000), the reformists in power and the reform movement in civil society remained relatively active and energetic. In the second phase (2000-2005), as the reformists in power became defensive the conservatives became aggressive. The reformists' defensiveness produced doubt and disillusionment in civil society regarding their goal of reforming the clerical establishment. In the third phase (2005-present), the conservative hardliners returned to power through a well organized electoral campaign in the June 2005 presidential elections. Their victory marked the beginning of Iran's fourth government.

---

[685] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, "Defining Some Concepts," in Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, Schmitter *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 7.

[686] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.3.

## 2.1. The first phase (1997-2000): "Iran for All Iranians"?

Khatami's reformist government, Iran's third government of the Republic, aimed at refreshing the spirit of Iran's third wave of democracy. The goal was to return to, rather than subvert, the original message of the 1979 Revolution: a transition to democracy by establishing the rule of law, developing civil society, empowering citizens, reinforcing Republican components of the constitution, introducing a democratic discourse into the political establishment, institutionalizing an open public sphere, and pushing towards greater tolerance, dialogue, and democratic culture. "The mandate and mission of the President," Khatami argued in his inaugural speech, "is to institutionalize the rule of law, and Constitutionalism, first and foremost." [687]This is, he suggested, "the only way through which the continuity of the revolution, the dynamism of the system and the power and dignity of the noble people of Iran can be ensured." Khatami promised that he would protect "freedom of individuals and the rights of the nation [through] constitutionally guaranteed liberties, strengthening...the institutions of civil society...and preventing any violation of constitutional rights."[688] Likewise, "we should free our society from the old mentality of law-evasion and replace it with the mentality of respect for the constitution."[689] For Khatami, "security, justice, freedom, participation, and development too should be interpreted and implemented within this [constitutional] framework."[690] Having used his soft language and smooth approach, Khatami aimed at pushing the rule of law as far as possible, making the *vali-ye faqih* accountable to the

---

[687] "Inauguration Speech by President Khatami, 4 August 1997," <www.persia.org/Khatami/speech>, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 233
[688] Ibid
[689] "Khatami Interviewed on Elections," *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, 25 February 1997, FBIS-NES-97-053, 27 February 1997, quoted in Brumberg, 221.
[690] Ibid

public. He appreciated the existence of the office of the *velayat-e faqih* and of the current *vali-ye faqih*, while appealing to the constitution to place the authority of the *vali-ye faqih* within constitutional constraints. The *vali-ye faqih*, he argued, belongs not to one political faction but to the entire nation; more importantly, the *vali-ye faqih* "is the leader of all those who do not believe in religion but who have accepted the system." Khatami clearly argued that "the legitimacy of the government stems from the people's vote....The Islamic government is the servant of the people and not their master."[691] As one reformist organization argued, "the legitimacy of the Islamic regime and *vali-ye faqih* is based on the articles of the constitution and should not be considered to be above the law....*Velayat-e faqih* is not a post-delegated from God. He is an elected official with the confirmation of the constitution and religion. The constitution is the only guarantee of *vali-ye faqih's* power."[692]

As he faced a dual challenge, Mohammad Khatami's goals were twofold: he pushed forward the reform movement while simultaneously trying to ease the tension between hardliners and reformers. As a result, he had to meet the demands of civil society forces who voted for him in the interest of substantial change. He also needed to convince the conservative-hardliners and the *vali-ye faqih* that his reform policy would not weaken the regime. This has been a typical challenge when a peaceful transition to democracy is at hand. "If a peaceful transition to democracy is to be possible," Adam Przeworski argues," the first problem to be solved is how to institutionalize uncertainty

---

[691] "Khatami Addresses Majles Hezbollah Group," *Ettela'at*, 27 February 1997, FBIS-NES-97-053, 27 February 1997, quoted Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 223
[692] *Asre-Ma*, November 19, 1997, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, pp. 255-256

without threatening the interests of those who can still reverse the process."[693] For Khatami, the most effective way to walk this fine line was to attach his reform policies to the legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini, reinterpreting him to meet his reform agenda.

The reformists' real source of power derived from civil society. They enjoyed soft-power supported by the youth, students, women, and the middle class – including the intellectuals, modern businessmen, and reformist's newspapers. The post-1997 newspapers, as Abrahamian argues, "transformed the whole tenor of public debate" from the discourse of revolutionary populism into those of democracy and dialogue, citizenship and civil society, and participation and pluralism. As such, the public sphere was experiencing "a cultural revolution as significant as the 1979 political revolution."[694] The reformists, however, remained extremely weak in terms of controlling hard power. It was limited to the executive branch of the government, which was subject to indirect pressures from the *vali-ye faqih*. By contrast, the conservative-hardliners controlled the institution of the *velayat-e faqih* and all the powerful – formal or informal – associated institutions. They controlled the Judiciary and the Guardian Council. The fifth *Majles* was predominantly, though not exclusively, in control of the hardliners. This complex composition of power structure, and therefore the uneven balance of formal power between hardliners and softliners, can possibly explain why President Khatami decided to work with the *vali-ye faqih*, making him an agency for reform. And yet, as will be discussed shortly, this line of argument hardly explains why Khatami paid little attention to his real source of power: the people's soft power.

---

[693] Adam Przeworski, "Some Problems in the Study of Transition to Democracy," in G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter, L. Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), p.60.
[694] Abrahamian, *Empire Strikes Back*, p. 119

The conservative hardliners were disappointed with the reform agendas and strategies. Unable to win over Khatami's popularity, they chose to block the reform movement and unseat the reformist president. They targeted reform's political institutions and its social base, and using their institutional privileges avoided implementing the reform agenda. They then purged effective and influential reformist characters from office. The reformist mayor of Tehran, Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi, whom the hardliners blamed for their election defeat and regarded as a key figure in the reformist government, was charged for corruption and eventually imprisoned. Karbaschi's trial showed that the hardliners were looking for scapegoats.[695] Two critical ministers of Culture and the Interior were among the first targets. The fifth *Majles* impeached Abdullah Nouri, the Minister of the Interior, in July 1998.[696] Ataollah Mohajerani, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, was forced to resign in early 1999. These ministers in their institutional position were critical in pursuing the reform agenda and promoting institutions of civil society as promised by President Khatami. The conservative head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, Rahim Safavi, instead threatened the reformists, directly pointing to both ministries of state and culture: he warned,

> These days newspapers are published that are endangering national security and are in line with the words of the enemy and the United States.... I have told Mr. Mohajerani that your way [allowing press freedom] is endangering national security; do you know where you are going?...I am after uprooting anti-revolutionaries everywhere. We must behead some and cut out the tongues of others. Our language is the language of the sword and seekers of martyrdom. ...The ministry of state is behind Montazeri's mayhem.[697]

---

[695] Karbaschi's trial contributed much to the politicization of the public. People equated him with the nineteen-century popular Prime Minister, Amir Kabir who was executed by the Qajar despotic Monarch. According to a poll, some 91.5% of the population watched the trial. See *Tous* daily, 5 Mordad 1377/27 July 1998, p. 1

[696] Nuri later published the reformist *Khordad* daily and was eventually imprisoned

[697] *Ja'meeh*, April 30, 1998

The tension soon reached the intellectual and ideological front. In response to the reformists' attempt to empower the Republican institutions and expand Republicanism to the office of the *velayat-e faqih*, the conservative-hardliners fought back: in a letter to the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei, the powerful and well-organized conservative political party of the *Jam'eeyat-e Mo'talefeh-ye Islami* (The Islamic Coalition Association) suggested replacing the Islamic Republic with an "Islamic Justice Government" (*Hokomat-e Adl-e Islami*). The proposal aimed at deleting "Republic" from the name of the state and thus eliminating all the Republican features of the Islamic Republic.[698] Ayatollah Khamenei himself took a critical position against the 1997 May Movement, arguing that, "the enemies of Islam are seeking to separate religion from politics. Using seductive Western concepts such as political parties, competitive pluralist political system, and bogus democracy, the Westernized are trying to present a utopic picture of Western societies and portray them as the only salvation for our Islamic society."[699]

At the societal level a wholesale counter-attack against the reformist intellectuals and their newspapers was organized. Some newspaper closed down were *Jame'eh* (Society) in June 1998, *Tus* in October 1998, and *Neshat* (Joy) in October 1999. A number of journalists such as Faraj Sarkuhi and Akbar Ganji were tried and imprisoned. Even worse, in late November 1998 four dissenting intellectuals, Majid Sharif, Mohammad Mokhtari, Mohammad-Ja'far Poyandeh, and Pirooz Davani, and two leaders of the nationalist opposition, Dariush Forouhar, Mehdi Bazargan's Minister of labour in the interim government, and his wife, Parvaneh, were killed. This terror operation identified as "the chain murders" or "serial killings" was, ironically, designed and

---

[698] *Shoma*, April 1997, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 258
[699] *Resalat*, July 24, 1998, quoted in Moslem, p. 259

controlled by the hardliners working inside the Ministry of Intelligence under Ghorban-Ali Dorri-Najaf-Abadi, a conservative-hardliner trusted by the *vali-ye faqih*. This operation was shocking, but not unique, since the Ministry had repeatedly assassinated other leading intellectuals inside Iran and abroad. The goal was to terrorize the opposition, to weaken the position of the softliners, and regain the confidence the hardliners lost after Iran's 1997 May Movement. In the end, with Khatami's determination, the Minister of Intelligence was forced to resign; the operation failed to terrorise the reformists; and the reformists, in particular the journalist Akbar Ganji, escalated the tension by investigating a series of murders presumed to have been ordered during the second regime. Former President Rafsanjani was implicitly blamed for his sanction or wilful neglect of such regime terror. Akbar Ganji explicitly charged Rafsanjani's Minister of Intelligence, Ali Fallahiyan, and the deputy minister, Saeed Emami, for a host of murders and attempted murders, including that of Iranian writers on a bus trip to a conference in Armenia.[700] However, despite Khatami's initial determination the case of the serial killings and other murders remained closed; justice was never rendered. The *vali-ye faqih* and the ex-President Rafsanjani remained as powerful as they were; the former Minister of Intelligence, Ali Fallahiyan, was elected to the Assembly of Experts, but his deputy reportedly committed a dubious suicide while imprisoned.

The most significant social base of reform, students, was attacked next. When the daily newspaper *Salam* published a letter from Saeed Emami, the former deputy Minister of Intelligence in charge of the chain murders, advising that the regime must work on a tighter press law, it was closed. The closure of *Salam* provoked a three-day

---

[700] Akbar Ganji, *Tarik-Khane-ye Ashbah* (*The Cellar of Phantoms*) (Tehran: Tarh-e No, 1378/1999)

student demonstration at the University of Tehran, known as the July 1999 Student Movement. Students chanted for Mohammad Mosaddeq, the charismatic leader of Iran's second wave of democratic transition, and held pictures of Ali Shariati, a leading radical critic of conservative clerical Islam. The *Hezbollahi* militias stormed a dormitory on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 1999, when some two hundred students were wounded, and at least one killed, and many were imprisoned. President Khatami and other reformist leaders asked students to end the demonstration, fearing that some hardliners would plan to exploit the unrest, call a state of emergency, and even topple the reformist government. Some Revolutionary Guard commanders warned Khatami that they would not remain silent if he failed to control the unrest. Both Khamenei and Khatami condemned the extremists, praised each other for their respected roles, and tried to calm the students.[701] For the people in general, and the students in particular, Khatami's reputation was damaged. Some critics blamed Khatami for not doing enough in support of the students. But the reformists remained popular, winning two elections; the 1999 municipal elections and the six parliamentary elections in 2000.

Remarkably, on the eve of the parliamentary elections of 2000 the Special Clerical Court went so far as to charge the ex-Minister of Interior Abdollah Nouri with blasphemy! Because Nouri would be the reformist Speaker of the sixth *Majles*, the hardliners sent him to prison, preventing him from running for the parliamentary elections. His defence in the court was covered in the media, and this coverage helped the reformists. He questioned Iran's domestic and foreign policy, indicating that Iran should

---

[701] In a defensive and ridiculous reaction to the ever increasing demands for freedom, Ayatollah Mesbah-e Yazdi, a leading ideologue of the hardliners, argued that freedom does not mean idleness, sex and promiscuity. The implication of his argument was that the major social base of the reform movement is the youth who are under sexual pressure and chanting for further sexual freedom!

have pursued a moderate approach to the Arab-Israeli peace process while promoting diplomatic ties with the United States. Nouri argued for all Iranians to have the right to participate in the politics of their country.[702]

The victory of the reformists in the sixth parliamentary elections of 2000 and the symbolic victory of the first three Tehran MP's indicated that they were still popular.[703] With a motto of "Iran for all Iranians" the Islamic Iran Participation Front, the reformist party founded in 1998, won 160 seats, independents won 37, and 67 seats remained for a run-off election. The reformists and their allies held a majority of the seats in the *Majles*. The sixth *Majles* elections proved the reform movement was still popular across the country. The year 2000 was marked as the year when the reformists controlled both the legislative and the executive powers. Yet from this peak they began to decline and lose their support and influence in the country.

## 2.2. The Second Phase (2000-2005): Resistance Through "Active Calmness"!

During the second phase President Khatami and the reformists took a defensive rather than active approach.[704] The conservatives following the 2000 election intensified their counter-reform efforts, and turned to undermining the *Majles*. The *Majles* was constitutionally entitled to investigate all financial and political bodies supervised by the *vali-ye faqih*. This included the powerful Foundation of the Oppressed, Imam Khomeini's Relief Committee, the National Radio and Television, the Revolutionary Guards, and the Judiciary. The conservatives responded in the Guardian Council and the Expediency

---

[702] Abdollah Nuri, *Shokaran-e Eslah* (*Hemlock of Reform*) (Tehran: Tarh-e No, 1378/1999)

[703] They were close relatives of the three top reformists: President Khatami's younger brother, Abdollah Nuri's brother, and Ataollah Mohajerani's wife.

[704] This refers to the strategies developed by the Islamic Revolutionary Mojahedin Organization, a reformist political group which suggested that the reform needs stability and thus the reformists should avoid tension. In the end, however, such strategies as the "active calm" or "active deterrence" proved to be less active and more calm.

Council, chaired by Rafsanjani, by ruling that the *Majles* cannot investigate the activities of the institutions supervised by the *vali-ye faqih*. Article 90 of the Constitution authorized the *Majles* to investigate all state institutions, but since the Guardian Council still remained the final authority to interpret the Constitution the reformist attempt to strengthen the Republican interpretation of the Constitution failed. From June 1997 to January 2004 the Guardian Council vetoed 111 of the 297 bills prepared by the reformist government and approved by the *Majles*. They included Khatami's "Twin Bills" aiming at enhancing the president's authority by reducing the *vali-ye faqih*'s authority, and also reforming the electoral law by eliminating the veto power held by the Guardian Council to approve candidates' qualifications for elections.

By 2002 the slow pace of reform and the deadlock in promoting the reform agenda divided the reformists. The meaning of reform and how to proceed became contested issues. There were the "Islamic constitutionalists" arguing that reform should be limited to the state's policies in relation to the people. They argued for working within the existing constitutional framework.[705] Others demanded greater institutional reforms in the power-structure by amending the constitution to strengthen its Republican character. Khatami and most reformists including Saeed Hajjarian, the president's advisor, supported the first approach. But those identified as the "Republican forces" insisted on some radical change in the existing institutional arrangements. In his March 2002 Republican Manifesto, the reformist-journalist Akbar Ganji argued for a system in which all Iranians – regardless of creed, color, gender, or class – would enjoy natural and equal

---

[705] The Islamic constitutionalists remained divided on the scope of the reforms. The more radical vision was represented by the Islamic Iran Participation Front led by Mohammad-Reza Khatami and the reformist strategist, Saeed Hajjarian. The relatively conservative vision of the reform was best represented by Mehdi Karrubi, the Speaker of the Sixth *Majles*, and the leader of the Society of the Militant Clerics.

right to participate in the political process, and the vali-ye faqih would be popularly elected, serving a limited term. Likewise, Mohsen Sazgara, another key reformist journalist, argued that "the structure of Iran's current constitution is fundamentally and inherently flawed. No reform in any positive direction is possible within its framework."[706] As such, the goal, he argued, is as clear as this: "a democratic regime based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." The "method" is "a constitutional referendum;" the "strategy" is "nonviolent civil disobedience;" and the motto is "democracy, peace, and human rights."[707] These views will be discussed later.

The crisis came to a head when reformers in the government could no longer bring people to the polls. The official turnout in the 2003 municipal elections dropped from 57 percent in 1999 to 28 percent, and in Tehran the turnout was around 12 percent. The reformists were defeated, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – a conservative-hardliner, a former member of the Revolutionary Guards Corps, and the future president of the Republic – became Tehran's mayor. Further reversal came in February 2004, during the seventh parliamentary elections, when the Guardian Council disqualified some 3,600 reformist candidates for the *Majles* election. With the people having lost faith in the reformists' ability to make any difference, this action of the Guardian Council produced little reaction. The conservatives won the majority of seats, even though the turnout was the lowest in post-revolutionary Iran (some 50 percent compared to 80 percent in the sixth *Majles* election of 2000).

---

[706] Mohsen Sazgara, "What should 'We' do Now?" Journal of Democracy 16.4 (2005) 64-73, p. 71)

[707] Ibid

The 2004 *Majles* election was indicative of new developments. For the first time in the history of the Republic, the Revolutionary Guards veterans received a third of all *Majles* seats. This was carefully planned to strengthen the revolutionary-security forces. Since 1997, the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei and his allies had begun strengthening the state-security forces, in particular the Revolutionary Guards Corps and the *Basij* militia. The military commanders were carefully appointed from committed conservatives loyal to the *vali-ye faqih*. The *vali-ye faqih* also decided to play an increasingly active role in executive power when the conservatives took over the seventh *Majles* and Khamenei's close relative became Speaker of the *Majles*. These two developments signalled the "personalization of power" under the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei.

"This 'conservative coup'," writes Vali Nasr, "cast a shadow over the 2005 presidential election and led many reformists to question the utility of elections as a tool for change."[708] For the conservative-hardliners, however, this experience provided three critical lessons for the 2005 presidential elections. They realized that people's apathy played a positive role in conservative victory, learned how to leverage economic issues in appealing for public support, and learned that their success depended on well-organized campaigns supported by conservatives in political, military, and economic institutions.

### 2.3. The Third Phase (2005-present): The fourth government

By 2005 it became evident that the reformists had failed to maintain their social base. The conservative-hardliners knew this. On May 22 the Guardian Council selected only six candidates to run in the presidential election, and disqualified the rest. This time both reformists and conservatives were divided, nominating more than one candidate. In

---

[708] Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On." Journal *of Democracy* 16 no.4 (2005): 9-22, p. 12

the first round reformists came with three candidates: Mostafa Moin nominated by the "progressive reformers" organized in the Islamic Iran Participation Front; Mehdi Karrubi, a former Speaker of the *Majles* nominated by more traditional-reformists organized in the Association of the Militant Cleric; and Mohsen Mehr-Alizadeh, the former vice-president, was an independent reformist candidate.[709] Likewise, the conservatives' candidates were Ali Larijani, the head of Iran's National Radio and Television, nominated by traditional-conservatives organized in the *Mo'talefeh-ye Islami*; Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf and Mohsen Rezai (the latter withdrew on the eve of the election day) held security-military ties with the Revolutionary Guards Corps, and were nominated by the younger generation of conservatives; and, finally, Mahmood Ahmadi-Nejad, the former member of the Revolutionary Guards Corps and Tehran's mayor at the time of the election, nominated by the new political group called *Abadgaran-e Iran-e Islami* (Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran). Soon it became evident that the *Abadgaran* was backed by the office of the *velayat-e faqih*, organized by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and encouraged and trusted by such hardline clerics as Ayatollah Jannati, the powerful Chair of the Guardian Council, and Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi, the most outspoken theorist of religious violence and champion of the clerical-totalitarian state. The last presidential candidate was Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the powerful Chair of the Expediency Council and head of Iran's pragmatist-conservatives. His candidacy was well received by modern-pragmatist-conservatives and was organized in the *Kargozaran-e Sazandegi*, some elements in the reformists' camp and some traditional-conservatives in

---

[709] The Guardian Council initially disqualified two reformist candidates, Mostafa Moin and Mohsen Mehralizadeh; they were, however, re-seated with the *vali-ye faqih*'s intervention. Because the reformist candidates were low in the public poll, the *vali-ye faqih* thought their participation would only ensure a greater turnout and political legitimacy for the Islamic Republic. This time, the reformists were far from victory.

Qom. For the first time in the history of the Republic, no candidate acquired 50 percent of votes in the first round held on June 17. All three reformist candidates failed to be one of the two candidates eligible for the second decisive round held on June 24. The two candidates in the runoff were Mahmood Ahmadinejad with some 12 percent, and Hashemi-Rafsanjani with 13 percent of all eligible voters. They had respectively received 19.5 and 21 percent of the actual votes.

The public saw in the former president Rafsanjani economic corruption and political dishonesty. He appeared as the candidate of the status quo, while Ahmadinejad without a clear record took 62 percent of the votes, amounting to 36 percent of the eligible voters. Two significant factors contributed to Ahmadinejad's success: first, he enjoyed secret support from the office of *velayat-e faqih*, all the revolutionary security forces, the Revolutionary Guards and the *Basiji* militia. This support included electoral fraud and an organized mobilization of the *Basijis* to cast their vote for him. Secondly, as an unknown, people saw him as a populist. He was also fortunate to run against Rafsanjani, a man identified with the politics of the Republic. In the runoff election the "protest vote," in part, played a significant role in Ahmadinejad's victory. Ahmadinejad received conservative votes from all social strata – including the urban poor, segments of wealthy bazaari-merchants, and military and political elites associated with the establishment. And yet he is the first president of the Republic not elected in the first round. The official turnout for the 2005 ninth presidential elections was 60 percent, while the turnout in the 1997 seventh presidential was 83 percent. This suggests that some 40 percent of the people, of which approximately 20 percent had actively participated in the

1997 elections, remained disappointed with the process of reform, if not the whole political system in Iran.[710]

The 2005 post-revolutionary presidential election, Iran's ninth, was a setback in Iran's third wave: it was a reverse wave. The President in Iran's fourth government is a product of the state-security apparatus, the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei, and the extremist faction of Iran's conservative-hardliners, all eager for greater personalization of power. He represents a powerful political trend inside the political establishment: a conservative faction different from traditional-conservatives and pragmatist-conservatives. They are mostly young (ex) military and revolutionary men associated with the office of the *velayat-e faqih* and cultivated in the post-war period. Like the populist-revolutionaries in the first regime, they maintain an anti-Western, revolutionary discourse, a populist agenda and strategy, and a distributive-egalitarian socio-economic plan. Like the traditional-conservatives, they oppose socio-cultural, economic and political liberalization, believe in the *sharia*-based traditional Islam, and remain a highly conservative force. However, the differences between traditional-conservatives and this faction of conservatives are significant. First, they are more populist than their traditional counterpart. Their populism is a pragmatist one, aiming at exploiting popular discontent with the regime's economic policies. According to Ardeshir Mehrdad, they "attempt to form a new political movement in order to rekindle the social base of the regime, in particular among the urban and rural poor – something that had gradually eroded over the

---

[710] The Student Office for Consolidating Unity (*Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*) and the following individuals explicitly or implicitly called for boycotting the presidential elections: Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, the jailed journalist Akbar Ganji, the dissident lawyer Nasser Zarafshan, Iran's longest-serving political prisoner Abbas Amir Entezam, and the Nobel Prize–winning human rights lawyer Shirin Ebadi.

last 15 years."[711] Secondly, they are more socially-oriented and less ideological-bound, given their focus on social justice rather than abstract intellectual-Islamic discourse. A populist slogan such as "taking the oil money back to the people's table" is instrumental in serving their pragmatist purpose. Thirdly, their goal is to establish a populist, centralized workable state backed by the lower classes, sponsored by petro-dollars, and armed with nuclear weapons. To achieve this goal they need to establish an "interventionist state," both in domestic and international politics. It remains to be seen whether such an interventionist state is becoming a "praetorian state;" what is clear, however, is that most members of Ahmadinejad's cabinet, deputy ministers and provincial governors are members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. In domestic politics, the interventionist state aims at controlling the economic, cultural and political sphere, whereas in international politics it strives for greater and stronger regional roles. As Mehrdad argues, with these goals and tools "they believe they can confront both internal and external challenges without resorting to any structural changes, while maintaining the ideological-authoritarian nature of the regime."[712]

In the fourth government of the Islamic Republic, for the first time in the history of the Islamic Republic, a Khomeinist military man and not a Khomeinist *mullah*, is the president of the Republic. For the first time the conservative-hardliners, in spite of their internal conflicts, have gained complete control of the Republic, and the absolute rule of the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei seems at hand. But it is not clear yet whether with Ahmedinejad in office the Islamic Republic's social base will shift from the coalition of

---

[711] Ardeshir Mehrdad and Mehdi Kia, "Iran's Crisis: New-conservatives, regime crisis and political perspectives in Iran," *Iran bulletin*, August 15, 2005.

[712] Ibid

the *mullah*-merchant to that of the revolutionary security and military forces. This shift would imply a fundamental structural change in the nature of the state and its relation with society. Some people suggest that "there is evidence that the coup that was carried out behind the curtains of elections was not just directed against reformists, or the leading candidate Hashemi Rafsanjani, but against the majority of the existing groupings in the ruling oligarchy."[713] The *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei has shown his determination for personalizing power in his hands by placing his own men in all three branches of the state. This proposal might bring future tension between the office of the *velayat-e faqih* and its original social base consisting of the traditional and pragmatist conservatives with the bazaari-merchants organized in the *Mo'talefe-ye Islami* and some other Revolutionary Foundations.[714]

The future prospect for Iran's fourth government remains unclear. What is clear is that the regime suffers from a number of internal contradictions. Economic policy remains the main challenge. The fourth government speaks about distributive social justice, promises to fight Iran's New Class of the mafia-like rentiers, (the clerical noble-sons (*aghazadeh-ha*)), and assure the poor they will bring the "oil money to their table."

---

[713] The word 'coup' is used as a metaphor to explain the conditions under which the new president came to office. For the first time in the Republic, to use revolutionary guard commander Zolqadr's words, "in a complex way ... and [through] multi-layered planning", that is a bloodless coup, a new president came to office. See Ardeshir Mehrdad and Mehdi Kia, "Iran's Crisis: New-conservatives, regime crisis and political perspectives in Iran," *Iran bulletin*, August 15, 2005. Also "According to official figures, Ahmedinejad got 5.7 million votes in the first round and 17.2 million in the runoff. How did he gather an additional 11.5 million votes in one week? Even if turnout remained the same across rounds, and if Ahmedinejad received all the votes that went to the other hard-line candidates in the first round (Ali Larijani and Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf) that would only give him an additional 5.8 million votes. If in fact, as the regime admits, second-round turnout was actually lower than first-round turnout, how could Ahmedinejad have almost tripled his total number of votes?" Bill Sami'i, "Iran: Do the Presidential Vote Numbers Really Add Up?" *Radio Liberty,* 30 June 2005.

[714] In addition to the in-system reformists led by Khatami and Karrubi, recent developments have displeased such conservative individuals as Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Nategh-Nuri, the former speaker of the *Majles,* the leading conservative Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, and Asgar Oladi, the leader of the *Mo'talefe-ye Islami,* the most organized conservative political party.

The irony is that they are blessed and backed by the shadow-economy run by the Revolutionary Foundations and controlled by the office of the *velayat-e faqih*.[715] In 1996, a *Hamshahri* editorial posed a number of questions on the economic agenda of conservatives, and they remain relevant in 2005:

> Do those who place social justice at the top of their covenant and scorn supporters of economic development know that any kind of social justice is not possible without taxing the well-off, closing the source of colossal profits made by certain segments of society, and adjusting the system of income in the country? And [do they know] how giving handouts through oil money is an ephemeral policy and detrimental for the regime....Should it not be said to the people that the effortless profits of a few brokers made through the exertion of political pressures of a certain camp and that these people do not pay even a minuscule amount of taxes for the huge sums that they make?[716]

Moreover, to fight poverty, corruption, and social injustice, the Republic needs domestic and foreign capital invested in the economy. Capital accumulation and investment could free Iran's dependency on the oil economy, but these are connected to a stable political situation and a non-confrontational foreign policy. In theory, President Ahmadinejad is a firm believer in the clerical-autocratic elements of *Khomeinism* and opposes political liberalization. In practice, however, it remains to be seen how far he will go in consolidating authoritarian politics. It is safe to suggest that three factors might pose some difficulties for Ahmadinejad's presidency: the dynamics of Iranian society and its democratic forces, the factional elites inside the political establishment, and the pressure and forces of the international community and globalization.

---

[715] One example, among many others, is the case of Ahmadinejad's second nominee for the Oil Ministry. During the parliamentary debates, it became evident that the nominee, a close friend of the president and the member of the Revolutionary Guards, is a billionaire real-estate broker benefiting from exclusive political rents.

[716] *Hamshahri* (Tehran: Februrary27, 1996), quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 236

In sum, the third phase reflected the crisis of the reform and the consolidation of the counter-reform forces. It brought to an end the reformist government and a new reverse wave.

## 3. Khatami's Moment: A Lost Momentum for Civil Society Forces?

According to Iris Marion Young, "the critical and oppositional functions of the public spheres of civil society perform irreplaceable functions for democracy."[717] The fall of the reformists indicated that Iran's civil society forces were dissatisfied with the overall policies of the reformists. Iranian civil society was disappointed with the reformist regime, not with democratic reform. It is in this context that Khatami's moment was a lost opportunity for the reform movement: an opportunity which had to be seized. In this section we will examine to what degree the reformists' strategic decisions, and to what extent the post-revolutionary content or the shadow of *Khomeinism,* contributed to this loss.

### 3.1. Strategic Considerations

The 1997 May Movement created a momentum for change and a serious opportunity for a transition to democracy. As argued earlier, the potential was available for two main reasons. First, the Islamic Republic was always exposed to factional politics, but the intensity of elite factionalism during Khatami's government was without precedent in the Islamic Republic. A deep split among the elite weakened the position of the conservative hardliners and strengthened the position of the reformists. It was in this context that the reformists enjoyed a degree of political maneuverability during the first

---

[717] Iris Marion Young, "State, Civil Society and Social Justice," in I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordon, eds., *Democracy's Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), P. 152

phase of Khatami's government. Second, the reformists enjoyed very substantial support from all segments of civil society. The 1997 reform movement brought a reformist president to power who received consistent and unconditional support from civil society forces in order to deliver the reform agenda. Significant segments of civil society forces, youth and women in particular, were eager for a greater socio-political opening. Some openly spoke of Iran's version of a peaceful revolution, the referendum movement, and organizing civil society institutions. Others such as Iran's Nobel Prize winner for Peace, Shirin Ebadi, successfully established mutual relations between domestic and international human rights organizations. Students and intellectuals cast their vote for Khatami's presidency twice; they also voted for the reformist candidates in parliamentary and municipal elections in order to see some significant change. As dissident journalist Akbar Ganji put it, the genies of democracy were out of their bottles and the bottles that once contained them were broken. By 1998, 740 newspapers with a daily circulation of one-hundred thousand were published in Iran, and currently some 86,000 Iranian Web logs have made Persian the third most frequently used language on the Internet next to English and Mandarin-Chinese.[718] An active civil society was available, but the reformists, due to circumstantial constraints and failures of vision, did not seize the possibility of change.

## 3.2. Multiple Constraints

The fall of the reformist government was not purely a result of strategic misjudgments or unmade decisions. The reformists were bound by certain political, social, transnational, and cultural content. They had limited space in which to play a game of democratic transition. This will be discussed in the following sections.

---

[718] Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls on," p.11

## 3.2.1. Transnational factors

The potential effects of transnational factors on regime transition are undeniable, but these effects are "mediated by domestic conditions" such as state structures.[719] This section shall examine the interaction between the political institutions of the Islamic Republic and international politics during Khatami's reformist regime. More specifically, this section will examine the extent to which President George Bush's speech about "regime change" in Iran and the nuclear issue, on the one hand, and the institutional legacy of *Khomeinism*, on the other, contributed to the reverse wave of democratic transition. In an earlier section of this chapter, the persistent efforts of regime hardliners to undermine reformist efforts were given extensive coverage. American foreign policy in particular had the effect of reinforcing the hardliner position and thus further challenging the reformists' prospects.

During the 1997 presidential-election-campaign, Mohammad Khatami made it clear he would pursue a policy of détente. "In the field of foreign policy," Khatami argued "we would like to announce that we are in favor of relations with all countries which respect our independence, dignity and interests."[720] Once elected as the president, his first attempt was to improve Iran's relations with Europe and neighboring countries. When Khatami assumed the presidency in 1997, no European ambassador was working in Iran. Khatami reduced the tension with the European Union by clearly suggesting that the case of Salman Rushdie is closed and that Iran would never attempt to implement the 1989 Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against this author. Europeans then reopened their

---

[719] James Mahoney, "Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research: The Case of Democracy and Authoritarianism," p. 166.
[720] BBC SWB ME/2917 MED/11, 13 May 1997;Iranian TV, 10 May 1997, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam, and Democracy*, p. 131

embassies in Tehran. Contrary to the United States' approach, the European Union engaged in a "critical dialogue" with the Iranian government, demanding of Iran greater respect for political and human rights. For the most part, Iran's response was positive. As a result, for the first time since 1979 the UN Human Rights Commission itself – in opposition to the United States – declined to put Iran among the countries that violated human rights. Moreover, Khatami realized that Iran could not normalize relations with the Persian-Gulf sheikdoms so long as it did not harmonize its relations with Saudi Arabia. Khatami successfully established good relations with Saudi Arabia, which nullified the dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates over Abu Musa, the lesser and the greater Tunb islands. Only a few months after the 1997 election, in December the eighth Summit of the Islamic Conference Organization was held in Tehran, a success for Khatami's regional policy of ending an era of Iran's isolation.

Shortly after his election, in an interview with CNN, Khatami praised American civilization, expressed his appreciation for American democracy and its link with religion, paid respect to the American people, acknowledged the legitimacy of the American government, condemned all forms of terrorism, and even expressed his regret for the 1979 American hostage crisis.[721] Nonetheless, Khatami criticized American foreign policy for the "mode of relationship" it pursues with nations such as Iran; he also condemned American foreign policy for its dependence on Israel and vice versa. He said,

> a *bulky wall of mistrust* [exists] between us and the American administration, a mistrust rooted in improper behavior by the American governments. As an example of this type of behavior, I should refer to the admitted involvement of the American government in the 1953 *coup d'etat* which toppled Mosaddeq's government, immediately followed by a $45m loan to strengthen the coup

[721] CNN, "Interview with President Khatami," January 8, 1998. In this interview, Khatami called the 1979 American hostage crisis a "tragedy" and "excessive."

government. I should also refer to the capitulation law imposed by the American government on Iran.[722]

In September 1998, Khatami made a significant speech in the UN General Assembly, suggesting that all civilizations need an understanding of each other and engagement in dialogue with one another. Soon, Khatami's idea of "Dialogue between Civilizations" gained recognition, as the United Nations declared the year 2001 the official year of Dialogue between Civilizations. Khatami's UN speech "raised hopes for a détente" with the U.S.[723] Washington's response to Khatami's initiatives was positive, which toned down the anti-Iranian rhetoric and took some small positive steps. On June 17, 1998, U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright responded: "we are ready to explore further ways to build mutual confidence and avoid misunderstandings. The Islamic Republic should consider parallel steps...As the wall of mistrust comes down, we can develop with the Islamic Republic, when it is ready, a road map leading to normal relations."[724] President Khatami's speech opened up a series of exchange activities in sports, academe, and the arts. After half a century, for the first time Madeleine Albright admitted that the United States had "orchestrated the overthrew of Iran's popular prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddeq"[725] in the 1953 coup. "Moreover, former senior policy makers, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft, and Richard Murphy, spoke out in favor of ending 'dual containment' – a policy that had been imposed against Iran as well as Iraq."[726] With the support of the United States, Iran received over $500 million in loans from the World Bank. The United States met with Iranian officials at the United

---

[722] BBC SWB ME/3210 MED/2, 9 Jan. 1998; Iranian TV, 8 Jan. 1998, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, p. 135

[723] Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 93

[724] Office of the Spokesman, June 18, 1998, U.S. Department of State; quoted in Gary Sick, p. 201.

[725] Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, "Address on Iran," *Iran Times*, March 24, 2000.

[726] Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights,"p. 95

Nations over the Afghanistan issue, added the Iranian opposition group People's Mojahedin Organization to the list of terrorist organizations, and removed Iran's name from the list of major drug-producing states.[727]

The administration of President Gorge W. Bush did not alter the Clinton administration's opening relations to Iran. In post- September 11 2001, Iran was instrumental in removing the Taliban government and establishing a pro-American regime in Afghanistan: not only did Iran support the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance but, as Americans admitted, Iran was, "extremely helpful in getting Karzai in as the president."[728]

The 2002 speech of President Bush, in spite of his carefully choosing his words to attack "non-elected" sections of the Iranian state, proved to be counterproductive. The speech was instrumental in launching an anti-American united front, which brought together the *vali-ye faqih* and his traditional-conservative allies, the pragmatist-conservatives headed by Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the reformist President Khatami and the reformists. The hardliners were quick to cite national security when attacking the reform institutions and the reformers. The speech contributed to the consolidation of Iran's reverse democratic wave in a number of ways. According to Ervand Abrahamian,

> Although billed as supporting 'Iranian citizens who risked intimidation and death on behalf of liberty, human rights, and democracy,' the speech had the exact opposite consequences. It created a mood of the past, especially of the 1953 coup....It emboldened conservatives with the argument that the notion of 'dialogue' is naïve, and that 'homeland security' is the most vital issue of the day. It persuaded some reformers to tone down their public demands; others to put their hopes on the back burner waiting for better days. It also energized exiles –

---

[727] Gary Sick, "The Clouded Mirror: The United States and Iran, 1979-1999," in Esposito and Ramazani, eds., *Iran at the Crossroads*, p. 201.

[728] Gary Sick, "The Axis of Evil: Origins and Policy Implications," *Middle East Economic Survey* 45, no. 14 (April 8, 2002), quoted in Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 96

especially Pahlavi royalists – who dread reform and hope that ultraconservative obstinacy will bring about a revolution.[729]

Bush's "axis of evil" speech raised much speculation about the U.S. plan for regime change in Iran. Resorting to the "ethnic card" in Iran, an American intelligence officer suggested that "poking ethnic issues could bring down the whole regime in a spectacular fashion."[730] Even prominent American scholars such as Bernard Lewis implicitly claimed that Iranians, next to the Iraqi invasion, would urge Americans to "come this way please,"[731] meaning an Iranian invasion. Washington began to repeat its charges that Iran was opposing the Arab-Israeli peace process, engaging in international terrorism, violating democratic and human rights, and developing nuclear weapons. Of these four charges, the last has remained the most significant one, raising the level of tension and hostility between the two states.[732]

Iran's nuclear program, begun under the Shah's regime in the early 1970, was interrupted by the revolution and the war and was revived in the early 1990's. The structure of international power itself much contributed to the revival of Iran's nuclear plan in a number of ways: first, the eight-year Iraq-Iran war, as discussed in chapter four, was started by Iraq and orchestrated by a number of Western and neighboring countries.

---

[729]Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 94

[730] Sharon Behn, "Pentagon Officials Meet with Regime Foe," *Washington Times*, June 4, 2003, quoted in Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 103

[731] Bernard Lewis, "Time for Toppling," *Wall Street Journal*, September 28, 2002; and interview with Professor Bernard Lewis, C-SPAN, December 30, 2001, quoted in Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," p. 103.

[732] As Abrahamian rightly observes, from the American point of view two issues of democratic and human rights as well as Iran's involvement in terror are more "polemical and peripheral" in nature. The U.S. remained silent and indifferent during Iran's reign of terror in 1980 and 1988 and never raised public objections over the assassinations of exiled Iranian opposition leaders. Ironically, America's reaction to Iran's violations of human rights began in post-1997, when Iran's behaviour had dramatically improved thanks to the election of President Mohammad Khatami. Similarly, there is not much hard evidence supporting Iran's involvement in anti-American terrorist activities. With the exception of Iran's support for Lebanon's Hezbollah, and insignificant aid to Hammas and Islamic Jihad, Iran's role in the Arab-Israeli peace process has been marginal. For further discussions, see Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights," pp. 102-108

Since war and peace were imposed on the Iranian state, the authorities planed to ensure the very survival of the state, pushing for the revival of the nuclear program. Secondly, Iran is surrounded by a number of nuclear powers including Russia, Pakistan, India, China, and Israel, not to mention the United States itself given the existence of American bases in almost all neighboring countries of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and other tiny Arab Persian-Gulf states, and Central Asian countries such as Georgia and Uzbekistan. For all these reasons, both geopolitically and geostrategically, Iran, the argument goes, has no choice but to develop its own nuclear program. Third, for the top-ranking authorities, a powerful nuclear Iran would contribute to national prestige and public pride, postponing and preventing popular protests against Iran's economic, political, and socio-cultural crises. Fourth, Bush's "axis of evil" speech, the quick American invasion of non-nuclear Iraq, and the American hesitancy to invade a nuclear North Korea offered a pretext to justify Iran's immediate military concerns and prioritize security over democracy.

Neither Iranian nor American politics is monolithic. In both countries the authorities share common concerns about national security, yet differ in approaches. In the United States, liberals, conventional conservatives and neoconservatives are divided on how to deal with the question of Iran. The "regime change" is pursued only by the neoconservatives who belong to American think-tanks such as The American Enterprise Institute and the Project for the New American Century, and securely established in the Pentagon and to a lesser degree the White House. Unlike their fellow conventional conservatives, they do not distinguish between factions inside Iranian politics, and are determined to undo the American loss of the 1979 revolution. Similarly, Iranian

authorities, in spite of their common concern on the very survival of the state and of the revolution, are divided on how to pursue this goal. For the in-system reformists, the strategy of "regime change" in general, and the American policy against Iran's nuclear program in particular, have no military solution and must be confronted at once with democracy at home and diplomacy abroad. Security and democracy are interconnected, and democratization will ensure the security and survival of the state. They worked with Europe, Russia and Japan to undermine U.S. efforts to isolate Iran, and slowed down military programs in return for good relations with Europe, and allowed more inspections and signed an additional protocol to assure the United Nations that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful. By contrast, for the conservative-hardliners, the nuclear issue, like the American hostage crisis and the Iran-Iraq War, served as a pretext to dismantle reforms and reverse the democratic wave. Liberalization and democratization, the hardliners believed, provided Americans with the best opportunity to overthrow the Islamic Republic. Not all the in-system reformists were strong enough to counter the anti-American rhetoric: some were "won over", some practiced "self-censorship", some "put the issue of reform on the back burner", and only a few continued to fight for both democracy and national integrity.[733]

In sum, post-September 11 2001 international politics put an end to Iran's efforts to normalize foreign relations. Khatami's discourse of "dialogue between civilizations" was lost in the situation that followed President Bush's "axis of evil" speech, which placed Iran among rogue states. It then became obvious that, contrary to the hopes raised by in-system reformists, Khatami's discourse and foreign policies could not provide the Islamic Republic with national security and stability against foreign

---

[733] Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights,"pp. 140-147

threats. Likewise, for the hardliners Khatami's discourse no longer acted as a safety valve for protecting the entire regime from international pressures. The strategy of regime change and its practice in Iran's eastern and western neighboring countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, together with escalating tensions over Iran's nuclear program, created a national-security concern and helped the hardliners consolidate their power, split the reformists and marginalized their agenda for democratic transition.

The conservative hardliners were quick to take advantage of the current global politics in consolidating their power. Because of the Unites States' military actions, Iran's most dangerous enemies in the East, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Saddam Hossein of Iraq to the West, are no longer in power. Moreover, the new regimes consist of Iran's regional allies: in Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance and the powerful governor of Herat, Ismail Khan, are close allies of Iran. In Iraq, Iran has successfully established close ties with the Shiite community – the Islamic *Da'wa* Party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, and the United Iraqi Alliance under Ayatollah Sistani – and the PUK and the KDP Kurdish parties. Furthermore, the difficulty Americans are facing in Iraq is part of the reason why the conservative-hardliners in Iran felt confident enough to take unprecedented risks in the 2005 ninth presidential elections.

The interaction between international politics and the institutional legacy of *Khomeinism* can produce a number of outcomes. On the one hand, "the main casualty"[734] in the American collision with Iran could be Iran's democratic movement, and ironically it would be only the United States which brings the Islamic Republic popular support among social forces inside Iran. On the other hand, a real challenge for a legitimate

---

[734] Ervand Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights,"p. 93

democratic opposition is to balance national interests with international opportunities by learning how to fight for democracy and national sovereignty while working within the boundaries imposed by international politics. In the early 1950's Mohammad Mosaddeq tried but failed, whereas in the late 1970's Ayatollah Khomeini succeeded in leading a national revolution while taking advantage of opportunities provided by international politics. The reformist President of the Republic was unable to transform transnational constraints into opportunities, pushing forward the democratic transition.

### 32.2. The Nature of the State: The institutional shadow of Khomeinism

An institutional approach, as discussed earlier, can better reveal the nature of the state and its role in the fate and future of democratic transition.[735] The institutional pattern of the Khomeinist state both enabled and disabled democratization. In the Khomeinist state, "as in communist party-states," Garton Ash argues, "there is intense factional struggle, which Western observers sometimes mistake for pluralism. Unlike in communist party-states, factions actually appeal to voters to strengthen their position."[736] Hence, elections become a mechanism of power-sharing for the elites, not for the electorate; elections serve factional politics and factionalism provides a limited degree of choice for the populace. Elite factional politics and, to use Brumberg's phrase, "dissonant institutionalization" increased political opening and yet decreased the institutionalization of the rule of law. According to Chehabi, "while the coexistence of different conceptions of what the Islamic Republic should be has resulted in the opening of a public sphere of

---

[735] This is obviously not to ignore the significance of culture and the value system that legitimize the political institutions. For some significant works on this issue, see George Steinmetz, *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) and Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 1963); also almost all the works of Pierre Bourdieu are helpful about the central relation between state and culture.

[736] Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam," *New York Times*, Volume 52, Number 17, November 3, <http://www.nybooks.com/contents/20051103>

discussion and debates, it has also prevented the emergence of a consensus on mechanisms for formulating policy and the development of a strong legal culture conducive to the rule of law."[737] Likewise, "dissonant institutionalization", as discussed before in detail, resulted in a constitutional deadlock, making the President of the reformist government, to use his words, a "footman" for the clerical establishment. The institutional shadow of *Khomeinism* created a vicious circle of legalism and constitutionalism in which the former President failed to satisfy, in his own words, the bottom-line demands (*kaff-e motalebat*) of the reformist government.

President Mohammad Khatami was neither a mere extension of the will of the political establishment, nor an opposition within the establishment. He belonged to the establishment and yet was determined to reform it without harming its very existence. Khatami did not want to repeat what Mikhail Gorbachev unwillingly did in the former Soviet Union, but to reform the system without destabilizing it. As a result, he remained in an extremely difficult and paradoxical position. According to Daniel Brumberg, "Khatami strove to sustain *and* transform Khomeini's dissonant legacy."[738] His goal was "to transcend the legacy of dissonant institutionalization,"[739] which "produced systems of 'contending authorities' whose eclectic foundations have been cleverly used by elites to enhance their legitimacy and at the same time hinder a transition from political liberalization to full democratization."[740] Khatami chose not to take Ayatollah Montazeri's advice openly offered to him in November 1997: "If I were you," the dissident Ayatollah advised, "I would go to the leader and tell him that, with all due

---

[737] H. Chehabi, "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective" p. 70
[738] Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 232
[739] Ibid, p. 245
[740] Ibid, pp. 248-49

respect, 22 million people voted for me while everyone knew that you preferred another candidate [Nateq-Nuri]. It means, therefore, that the people have rejected the existing order."[741] By contrast, Khatami strove to rationalize the office of the *velayat-e faqih*, which in his view would bring Iran one step forward in its democratic transition. He put too much trust in the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei, hoping that the *vali-ye faqih* would ultimately appreciate that the survival of the Islamic Republic rests on the success of the reform movement. He strived for a more democratic version of *Khomeinism*, "*Khomeinism* with a human face." This, however, turned out to be wishful thinking. For the conservative hardliners and Khamenei himself, the rationalization of the office of the *velayat-e faqih* would eventually cost the very survival of the Islamic Republic, and thus reforms were to be resisted.

Given the structure of the Iranian state, the conservative hardliners linked to the office of the *vali-ye faqih* held much of the hard power. Nonetheless, the popular president, as Ayatollah Montazeri reminded him, retained invaluable amounts of soft power, i.e. the people. The reluctant president, however, was unable to transform his soft power into hard power. As a result, Khatami effectively became a marginal man for both the state and the reform movement.

To conclude, the reformists did little to break the constitutional deadlock inherited in the structure of the state: their strategy of "Active Calmness" remained less active and more calm. Likewise, the "pressure from below" was sacrificed for "negotiation from above." They undermined democratization from below and followed the strategy of "Islamic constitutionalism." But the nature of the Khomeinist state contributed much to the failure of the strategy of "Islamic constitutionalism," projecting

---

[741] *Resalat*, November 23, 1997, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 257

"*Khomeinism* with a human face." The post-Khomeini state, to use Alfred Stepan's conceptual category, remains an "*early* post-totalitarian" regime. It is a post-totalitarian regime because neither Khomeini's charisma nor an organized ideology dominates the public sphere, but the political structure still remains under Ayatollah Khomeini's shadow. However, the legacy of *Khomeinism* put the state in the *early* stage of post-totalitarianism. Hence, the state still lacks sufficient diversity and autonomy within the ruling elites and is short of sufficient strength and autonomy within the democratic opposition. A transition to democracy has therefore been prevented because neither the state's softliners nor the democratic opposition was capable of playing the game of democratic transition. The failure of the in-system reformists proved that the state institutions remain intertwined with the interests of the ruling elites. It also revealed that the shadow of *Khomeinism* is powerful enough to make revisionism a failure.

### 3.2. 3. The Intellectual Shadow of Khomeinism

The strong intellectual shadow of Ayatollah Khomeini's discourse on the reformists' views equally contributed to the failure of the reformists. As demonstrated above, the reformist position was weakened as a consequence of the institutional legacy of Khomeini's efforts to recast the state after the revolution. The reformists were also bound by the intellectual legacy of *Khomeinism*: Khatami's intellectual discourse and Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas were different in tone and rhetoric, but shared the same epistemology. They both subscribed to a clerical version of cultural essentialism. Ayatollah Khomeini's capture and imprinting of the revolutionary state gave his approach sustainable power, such that the reformists felt bound by it and ill equipped to abandon key segments of it.

Post-revolutionary Iran, as Mehrdad Mashayekhi put it, has experienced two major political discourses: the anti-imperialist-revolutionary discourse and the Islamic Constitutionalism.[742] The former is composed of diverse religious, nationalist and leftist groups, which developed in pre-revolutionary Iran and remained popular until the first decade of the Republic. Preoccupied "with the radical, nationalistic anti-dependency perspective," this discourse hardly engaged with the democratic demands of the modern urban class. The war and its aftermath, the absence of a charismatic leader, explosive demographic changes in society, economic hardship, the regime's internal and international crisis of legitimacy, the rise of a non-violent and new democratic-Islamic discourse in civil society, and the rise of elites' factional politics all set the stage for the development of Islamic Constitutionalism in the 1990's. Three themes remained central to the discourse of Islamic Constitutionalism: the rule of law and constitutionalism (*ghanoon-gera'i*), promoting civil society (*jame'e-ye madani*), and eventually establishing an Islamic democracy (*mardom-salari-e dini*). By 2005, however, it became evident that the in-system reformists failed to deliver any elements of the discourse of Islamic Reformism. The failure of the reformist regime, as discussed before, was due to a number of factors. In this section, however, I shall discuss the extent to which ideas themselves contributed to the crisis of the reform and the consolidation of counter-reform.

Ayatollah Khomeini's view on socio-cultural issues was hardly progressive, and remained in line with the clerical conventional codes. Hence, the majority of the Khomeinist-reformists maintained similar views on socio-cultural issues with the

---

[742] Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "A new era for Iran's democracy," *Open Democracy* 16 - 6 – 2005.

conservatives, holding puritanical and non-progressive visions. Forced by the complexity of social issues and faced with the shift in the balance of political power, many of them changed their views in post-Khomeini Iran. In the post-Khomeini era, when the conservatives welcomed a sympathetic *vali-ye faqih* and enjoyed an upper hand in the system, the reformists altered their position and supported stronger republicanism. For this reason, their advocacy of the rule of law and endorsement of strong civil society, democracy and pluralism "lack historical precedent."[743] Nonetheless, the "lack of precedent" can hardly explain the failure of the Reformist regime in materializing its intellectual discourse. There is certainly much more to this.

### i. Rule of law or constitutionalism

The first pillar of the reformist discourse was the rule of law or constitutionalism. The reform movement revived the demand central to all three major waves of democratic transition in Iran. According to the President of the Republic, Mohammad Khatami, "Constitutionalism means that power is subject to the will of the people and the supervision of the people."[744] Khatami's position revitalized a historical fight between the pro-*sharia* movement and the constitutionalists, going back to the 1905 Constitutional Revolution. In theory, Khatami put himself in line with the constitutionalist Ayatollah Na'ini and kept distance from the conservative Ayatollah Nuri whose pro-*sharia* position went against the definition of constitutionalism in 1905. In practice, however, the reformists' concept of Islamic constitutionalism remained problematic and paradoxical.

---

[743] Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 268
[744] BBC SWB ME/3318 MED/17, 29 Aug. 1998; IRIB radio, 27 Aug. 1998, quoted in Ansari, Iran, *Islam and Democracy*, p. 149

"Democracies," Charles Tilly argues, "differ from other regimes because instead of the massive asymmetry, coercion, exploitation, patronage, and communal segmentation that have characterized most political regimes across the centuries, they establish fairly *general and reliable rules of law*."[745] A general and reliable rule of law implies that the law is universal and no person or office stands beyond the rule of law. Under *Khomeinism*, however, the rule of law is not universal since the office of *velayat-e faqih* stands outside the constitution. Khatami's concept of "Islamic constitutionalism" aimed at binding the office of *velayat-e faqih* with the constitution. The problem, however, was that Islamic constitutionalism was trapped by the lasting legacy of *Khomeinism*; it sought to reform the political institutions of the Republic without questioning the intellectual foundation of *Khomeinism*, Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih*. Hence, the challenge was to establish the rule of law while the *vali-ye faqih* rules absolutely; it attempted to revive constitutionalism while the rulings of the *vali-ye faqih* remained beyond the constitution. Islamic constitutionalism, in sum, lived in the same universe of *Khomeinism* and failed to reform a political system which is relatively "rich in constitution yet poor in constitutionalism."[746]

## ii. Promoting Islamic civil society

The process of democratization, as discussed before, involves the acts of political elites and civil society; it requires development of political and societal institutions.[747] President Khatami announced the development of civil society institutions as the second pillar of his reformist discourse. If intellectuals such as Soroush, among

---

[745] Charles Tilly, *Social Movements*, 1768-2004 (Boulder: Paradigm Publisher, 2004), 125.
[746] Daniel P. Franklin and Michael J. Baun, eds. *Political Culture and Constitutionalism: A Comparative Approach* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1995), p. 221.
[747] Ruth B. Collier, Paths to Democracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

others, "injected the idea of civil society into debates among the intelligentsia, Khatami introduced this concept to a much wider public, turning it into a subject for discussion among the political class and the public at large."[748] Khatami's presidency contributed to the transformation of Iran's political culture, both in the political establishment and in civil society. Mohammad Khatami contributed to the spread of democratic discourse, and to openness and transparency in the dominant political discourse in the clerical establishment. His presidency was also instrumental in greatly diffusing democratic discourse in civil society. Khatami was neither the first nor the most sophisticated intellectual debating democracy in post-revolutionary Iran. Many scholars and dissidents preceded him, and yet their message reached a limited constituency. Khatami's tenure, however, was effective in publicizing democratic discourse to a larger national audience.

The civil society discourse, in spite of its public currency, remained far from a success. Two factors, one theoretical and one practical, contributed to this failure. First, like the rule of law, the reformists' discourse of civil society contained conceptual confusion leading to political problems. "The ontological foundation of the political philosophy and institutions of the Islamic Republic," as Farzin Vahdat observes, results in "vacillation between allowing and denying citizenship rights."[749] This political philosophy offers "limited and indirect empowerment of the social universal," yet "affects the people as a collectivity and not as individual citizens."[750] For Vahdat, this

---

[748] Shaul Bakhash, "Iran's Remarkable Election," in Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg, eds., *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) p. 120

[749] Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Modernity* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), pp. 213-214.

[750] Ibid, pp. 166-167

political practice is based on an epistemology which simultaneously concurs with and conflicts with the philosophical foundations of modernity.

Two pillars of modernity, to use the Hegelian and Habermasian approach, are subjectivity and universality. Subjectivity is defined as "the property characterizing the autonomous, self-willing, self-defining, and self-conscious individual agent."[751] Subjectivity is not limited to individual freedom, which "refers to a lack of restraint," while "'subjectivity' refers to positive action on the world."[752] The second pillar of modernity, universality, is defined as "the mutual recognition among the plurality of subjects of each other's subjectivity."[753] More precisely, it "refers to the elimination of restrictions based on privilege, status or other substantive considerations." It means "a formal equality before the law."[754] For Hegel, civil society consists of two central pillars of modernity: subjectivity and universality. According to Hegel, civil society is "an association of members as self-sufficient individuals in a universality which because of their self-sufficiency is only formal."[755]

A closer look at the epistemology of the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Khomeinism*, suggests that in it the notion of human subjectivity is embedded in a universality of the divine and the collectivity of believers: a phenomenon, to use Vahdat's phrase, defined as "mediated subjectivity," which refers to the notion of

> human subjectivity projected onto the attributes of monotheistic deity – attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, and volition – and then partially

---

[751] Farzin Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Modernity*, p.1; for further discussion, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Rights*, edited by T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) and Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity – Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), p. 16

[752] Farzin Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut*, pp.1-2

[753] W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Rights*, p.110, quoted in Farzin Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut*, p. 2

[754] Ibid

[755] Ibid

reappropriated by humans. In this scheme, human subjectivity is contingent on God's subjectivity. Thus, although human subjectivity is not denied, it is never independent of God's subjectivity and, in this sense, it is 'mediated'. This situation usually leads to a core conflict between human and divine subjectivity, which in turn gives rise to other conflicts, one of the sharpest of which is the constant, schizophrenic vacillation between affirmation and negation of human subjectivity, on the one hand, and between individual subjectivity and collectivity, on the other.[756]

Khatami's reformist discourse, in spite of all different words, remained loyal to the worldview of *Khomeinism* and lived in the same universe of clerical Islamic discourse. Owing to the contradictory nature of mediated subjectivity, Khatami's discourse of Islamic civil society constitutes a vacillation between allowing and denying universal citizenship rights. For Khatami, "the first character of the civil society was written by a great religious scholar, the late [Ayatollah] Na'ini, during the Constitutional Revolution, which has recognized the right of the people; the right of the people to vote; the responsibility of the government to the people and the right of the people to question the government."[757] This is, Khatami argues, an "Islamic civil society:" a "unique and distinct view of existence [which is] *fundamentally* different from the 'civil society' rooted in Greek philosophical thinking and Roman political tradition."[758] According to Khatami, "in its historical and theoretical aspects, Western civil society was primarily inspired by the Greek city states, and subsequently, by the Roman political system. On

---

[756] Farzin Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut*, p. 134

[757] BBC SWB ME/3318 MED/17, 29 Aug. 1998; IRIB radio, 27 Aug. 1998, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, p. 149

[758] Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, "President's Opening Address to the OIC General Session," <www.Persia.org/khatami/khatami03.html>, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 223

the other hand, the historical and theoretical *essence* of the civil society that we have in mind is rooted in the esteemed Prophet's Medina."[759]

Keeping a clear distance from anti-Westernism, Khatami suggests that the two concepts of civil society, Islamic and Western, "should not necessarily contradict each other as far as their manifestations and outcomes are concerned. For this reason, we should never downplay the importance of learning – without imitating and copying – from the positive achievements of Western civil society."[760] In Islamic civil society, Khatami adds, "there should be no sign of individual and group despotism or even dictatorship of majority and efforts to destroy the minority."[761] He continues:

> In such a society humans and their rights are respected and revered. The citizens of Islamic civil society have the right to determine their destiny, supervise the implementation of their affairs and question their rulers and statesmen. Furthermore, in such a society, the state is the people's servant not their patron, and, as such, it is at all times accountable to the people upon whom God has bestowed the right of all self-determination. Our civil society is not a society in which Muslims are the only true citizens and enjoy all the rights. Rather, it is a society in which any human treading the path of law and order has rights, the defense of which is one of the most important obligations of the state.[762]

There are a number of unintended consequences to Khatami's argument: first, his discourse of "Islamic civil society" essentializes both Western and Islamic heritages. The partial truth to Khatami's argument is that "respecting human rights and observing its limits and boundaries is not something which we utter simply as a matter of political

---

[759] Mohammad Khatami, Speech at the Islamic Conference Organization in December 1997, BBC SWB ME/3099S/14-9, 11 Dec. 1997;Iranian TV, 9 Dec. 1997, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, pp. 145-147
[760] Ibid
[761] Ibid
[762] Ibid

expediency in order to join some universal chorus."[763] The problem, however, arises when he insists that "what we say is the *natural* outcome of our religious principles and learnings."[764] The modern understanding of people's rights, citizenship, democracy and civil society are not natural outcomes of religious principles, Islamic or otherwise. "The historical and theoretical *essence* of civil society" in a modern Muslim-majority state is not "rooted in the esteemed Prophet's Medina." Like other modern concepts, it has resulted from complex dialectical relations between culture, economy, and politics throughout history. Moreover, because religious outcomes vary – from fanaticism to progressive and democratic versions – religions exhibit neither natural outcomes nor a uniform essence. Cultural essentialism is ahistorical because outcomes are bound by history. Furthermore, Khatami offers neither a substantive theory nor an empirical fact, which outlines fundamental differences between the "Western" and "Islamic" versions of civil society. He simply essentializes a neutral concept, replacing a modern notion of civil society with the "Prophetic society" (*Madina-tan Nabi*). Contrary to Khatami's original intention, not only does this essentialism remain ahistorical, but it implies a dangerous political outcome: it replaces citizens with believers, and produces first-class and second-class citizens. For all these reasons, it is more plausible to speak of a "Muslim" than an "Islamic" civil society, where people rather than divine ideas define and determine the nature of civil society. Civil society, like other socio-political concepts has no uniform religious essence; rather, it remains a synthetic entity composed of socio-historical, cultural and political elements. Secondly, for Khatami civil society is based on our

---

[763] Khatami, BBC SWB ME/3099S/14-9, 11 Dec. 1997;Iranian TV, 9 Dec. 1997, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, pp. 145-147
[764] Ibid

"collective identity."[765] An Islamic civil society, he argues, should "recognize the heritage and traditions of the beliefs and thoughts of Muslims, on the one hand and, the exact and profound scientific and philosophical understanding of the contemporary world on the other." He also makes it explicit that

> we should know that between the Islamic civilization – *more correctly the civilization of the Muslims* – and our lives today, there stands a phenomenon known as Western civilization. A civilization whose effective achievements are not few, and its negative effects are also manifold, especially for non-Westerners. Our age is one of the domination of Western civilization and culture. Understanding it is necessary. An effective understanding goes beyond the frills of that civilization and reaches the roots and foundations of its values and principles.[766]

Khatami, in effect, reduced Iran's multiple collective identity to Islam: "Islamic thought and culture are the pivots of the civil society we have in mind." Or, our Islamic civil society "obeys the words of the Holy Koran and considers it as an obligation to provide all the requirements and necessities for material, economic and technological progress."[767] The triple Iranian identity combines elements of pre-Islamic culture, various versions of Islam, and modern Western ideas. Moreover, Khatami argues that it is more accurate and correct to call Islamic civilization "the civilizations of the Muslims," implying that he is aware of the flaw and fallacy of cultural essentialism. As for two concepts of civil society and democracy, however, he preferred to use the term "Islamic", not "Muslims." Furthermore, there is a potential danger to the concept of "collective." If Islam constitutes the sole or even major portion of Iranian identity, and if Iranian identity

---

[765] Khatami, BBC SWB ME/3099S/14-9, 11 Dec. 1997;Iranian TV, 9 Dec. 1997; quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, pp. 145-147

[766] *Salam*, (Tehran: 18 Azar 1376/9 Dec. 1997), p. 1; *Salam*, (Tehran 20 Azar 1376/11 Dec. 1997), P. 1; quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, p. 132

[767] Khatami, BBC SWB ME/3099S/14-9, 11 Dec. 1997;Iranian TV, 9 Dec. 1997; quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, pp. 145-147

remains a collective entity, the implication is that Iranian civil society organizations are mainly an extension of dominant Islamic politics. This ignores the very definition of civil society organizations, which are by definition independent entities which may or may not correspond to dominant politics, and may or may not remain committed to Islam or other elements of dominant politics. Hence, the notion of collectivity might preclude the individual autonomy intrinsic to all civil society organizations. Two leading reformists once argued that "Iranians are religious people and thus the associations and institutions they set up will indeed be based on religious and not secular principles."[768] Their argument is a case in point where a theoretical confusion leads to an unintended political danger that is the exclusion of a portion of the Iranian society.

The second factor contributing to the failure of the reformists' civil society discourse was practical in nature. The discourse, in effect, became more a subject of abstract intellectual debates and less an object of public political practice. The Reformist regime did little to empower civic associations, to encourage social movements, and to establish grassroots organizations. It is true that, as Cohen and Arato observe, civil society alone can hardly substitute for the elites' political strategies.[769] However, the Reformist regime in effect put down the strategy of "pressure from below." Given their weakness at the top of the political pyramid, the in-system reformists could have used the "soft-power" provided by civil society. The reformists' intellectual confusion together with their political passivity contributed to this loss, converting the civil society discourse into an empty slogan.

---

[768] The remarks made by Mohsen Kadivar and Abbas Abdi, in Mohsen Armin and Hojjat Razzaghi, eds. *Bimha va Omidha* (Tehran: Hamshahri Publications, 1999), pp. 140,166, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 255

[769] J.L. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992)

*iii. Islamic democracy*

According to Karl Mannheim, "in a realm in which everything is in the process of becoming, the only adequate synthesis would be a dynamic one."[770] In post-revolutionary Iran, both Islam and democracy have been "in the process of becoming." The question is whether the synthetic concept of "Islamic democracy," the third pillar of Khatami's reformist discourse, remained a dynamic synthesis. To what extent did Khatami's concept of Islamic Democracy contribute to Iran's long and painful march to democracy?

Khatami argued that "the experience of popular sovereignty based on religion is the greatest achievement of the Islamic Revolution."[771] In his interview with CNN, Khatami argued that in American democracy, referring to Alexis de Tocquville's *Democracy in America*, "liberty found religion as a cradle for its growth, and religion found protection of liberty as its divine calling."[772] "We feel that," Khatami claimed, "what we seek is what the founders of American civilization were also pursuing four centuries ago."[773] For Khatami, "one of the biggest tragedies in human history is confrontation between religion and liberty which is to the detriment of religion, liberty and the human beings who deserve to have both. The Puritans desired a system which combined the worship of God with human dignity and freedom." He adds, "therefore, in America, liberty and faith never clashed, and as we see, even today most Americans are

---

[770] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1960)
[771] *Asr-e Azadegan*, (Tehran: April 23, 2000), p. 2.
[772] Mohammad Khatami, "Transcript of CNN's Interview with President Khatami," <www.persia.org/khatami/khatami06.html>, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 234
[773] Ibid

religious people....I believe that if humanity is looking for happiness, it should combine religious spirituality with the virtues of liberty."[774]

Moreover, Khatami kept a clear distance from religious fanaticism, arguing that "we must understand our past; not for returning to it and stopping in the past, which is truly ossification, but for finding the essence and meaning of our identity and to purify it from preconceptions and habits that are totally dependent on time and place."[775] But the reformists' concept of Islamic democracy, in spite of all great intellectual strivings and good political intentions, lacked a solid theoretical base and a plausible political solution. However, it brought mixed results. From a theoretical perspective, the concept of Islamic democracy, like Islamic civil society, concurs with the internal dynamism of "mediated subjectivity." From a political point of view, it simultaneously enables and disables the forces of democratization. On the one hand, it offers an "enormous potential for universalizing inchoate subjectivity to the whole of society," mobilizing the public for a greater political participation. It also provides a potential opportunity "for transformation from *within*, a tendency that springs from its contradictory nature." More specifically, as Vahdat argues, "in revealing the complex and dialectical relationship between the forces of modernity and the metaphysics of monotheism in Iran, this contradictory nature has shown that monotheism and modernity – God and Juggernaut – are not totally antithetical entities, indeed, that monotheism may be reincarnated in modern forms."[776] On the other hand, Islamic-democracy discourse, and the conceptual confusion intrinsic to it, laid the foundation for a few political problems. First, the Islamic principles were utilized to

---

[774] Mohammad Khatami, BBC SWB ME/3210 MED/2, 9 Jan. 1998; Iranian TV, 8 Jan. 1998, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, p. 136

[775] *Salam*, (Tehran: 18 Azar 1376/9 Dec. 1997), p. 1; *Salam*, (Tehran 20 Azar 1376/11 Dec. 1997), P. 1; quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, p. 132

[776] Farzin Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut*, p. 214

create a sense of limited and inchoate subjectivity among the social universal. Hence, the people, by participating in demonstrations and elections, earned the right to participate in the affairs of their own country. Such participation, however, remained largely limited to endorsing *Khomeinism*. In the whole universe of *Khomeinism*, the "mediated subjectivity" set the solid epistemological ground for legitimizing a mediated agency in socio-political contexts. For the conservatives, and even some reformist-Khomeinists, if human subjectivity is contingent on God's subjectivity then people's rights and duties are contingent on God's representatives' on earth: the *vali-ye faqih*. But in contingent relationships between human and divine subjectivity, people's subjectivity in political participation is not denied, yet is never independent of the divine ruler on earth: the *vali-ye faqih*.

Second, Islamic democracy discourse contributed also to the intellectual confusion about the nature, scope, and meaning of modern democracy. Such confusion provided the hardliner-conservatives with a pretext to negate the very definition of democracy. In a public speech in 2002, the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei described the exclusive merits of Islamic democracy while rejecting the world's current concept of democracy: When the 12th Shiite *Imam,* known as the *Mahdi,* returns from his occultation, Khamenei argues, he will rely on the pious to lay the foundation for a universally popular government. "But this popular government," Khamenei argued,

> is *totally different* from the governments that claim to be popular and democratic in today's world... The world's democracies are based on propaganda, whereas the democracy of the Lord of the Age [the 12th Shiite *imam*, Madhi], *religious democracy*, is totally different.[777]

---

[777] Ayatollah Khamenei, *Keyhan* (Tehran, 6 July 2000)

The fact however, is that a democratic interpretation of Islam, as Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari put it, may concur with democracy yet it never built democracy on the principles of Islam. Muslims can be democrats; they can also come up with a democratic reading of Islam. Such democratic versions of Islam, however, do not make their state an Islamic democracy. Muslims ruling democratically become democrats; they do not make the state Islamic. For this reason, "Muslim democracy" is a more appropriate term than Islamic Democracy. Democracy is about power and power remains a worldly political concept. Islam, like other religions, recognizes this same secular, not sacred, power on earth. Political authority has no religious essence, Islamic or otherwise.[778] More precisely, as Abdulkarim Soroush in thinking about democratic Islam observes,

> we do not have religious and non-religious water or religious and non-religious wine. The same is true for justice, government, science, and philosophy. Even the subjects were to have an essence then their Islamization would be rather meaningless. As such, we can not have a science of sociology that is essentially religious or a philosophy that is essentially Islamic or Christian, the same way we can not have a system of government that is essentially religious.[779]

Third, Islamic-Democracy discourse revealed the intellectual crisis of *Khomeinism*, a great conflict between human subjectivity and divine subjectivity. Conflicts give rise to more conflicts, one of the sharpest of which is the constant shifting of ground between a confirmation and negation of human subjectivity in general, and a constant oscillation between free individual subjectivity and a collective notion of subjectivity embodied in the notion of people as believers. It was within this context that

---

[778] Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari, *"Rah-e Doshvar-e Mardom-Salari,"* [The Difficult Path to Democracy], in *Aftab* (Tehran: Bahman 1381/Januray 2001), pp. 30-37.

[779] Abdulkarim Soroush , *Mana va Mabnaye Secularism* [The Meaning and the Basis of Secularism] in *Kiyan* 26, (1995), pp. 4-13, p.11, quoted in Mehrzad Boroujerdi, "Subduing Globalization: The Challenge of the Indigenization of Movement," in: B. Schaebler and L. Stenburg (eds.) *Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion, and Modernity* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p.38.

some reformists parties, in particular the Islamic Revolution Mojahedin Organization, remained at least partially committed to the dichotomy of insider-outsider, dividing the Iranian citizens into first-class and second-class citizens. Hence, "Iran for all Iranians," as advocated by Islamic Iran's Participation Front, Iran's largest reformist party, remained an empty slogan, given the transformation of the definition of the "people as individual" into the "people as the faithful."[780]

### 3.2. 4. Fragmentation within reformism

It is also crucial to note the degree of fragmentation within reformism. The complex and ambiguous legacy of Khomeinism divided the reformists into two camps: the "Islamic constitutionalists" and "republican forces". They both share the view that republican institutions have been subordinated to the absolute rule of the *vali-ye faqih*, but disagree on the path to be taken to a democratic transition in post-Khomeini Iran. The fall of the reformist government revived this debate as to whether the Islamic Republic is reformable. According to the "Islamic constitutionalists" the Khomeinist state is still reformable and the reformists should make a new plan for returning to power. By contrast, the "republican forces" argue that the vicious circle of legalism has prevented the possibility of reform from above: the path to a democratic transition is creating social movements by empowering and organizing civil society forces. Debate persists, therefore, as to how to disentangle post-revolutionary Iran from Khomeini's profound influence, with implications for the prospects of reform.

---

[780] L. Boroumand and L. Boroumand, "Is Iran Democratizing? Reform at the Impasse," in L. Diamond, M. Plattner, and D. Brumberg, eds., *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 137.

### i. Islamic Constitutionalism: live long reform!

The post-Khomeini state, as discussed in detail, is neither a democratic nor totalitarian regime; the regime maintains a mixture of "post-totalitarian" and "authoritarian" features. Because the state is not totalitarian, the Republican institutions, the *Majles* and the presidency, remain partially significant in transforming the public resources. For this reason, the reformist constitutionalist Saeed Hajjarian believes that in spite of all the constitutional constraints, the reformists should make a plan for recovering their social base and returning to power. He argues paradoxically that while reform is dead, because no other option is feasible the alternative is nothing but reform. For Hajjarian the reformists can recover popular support through more organization, better use of media, raising funds from modern middle and upper classes and appealing to ordinary people's everyday material concerns, as Ahmadinejad successfully did in his campaign. Hence, for the Islamic constitutionalists, including Khatami, Karrubi and leading reformist political parties, the state is still capable of reforming its structure. The goal, they argue, is to revive the Republican institutions by appealing to the constitution, which holds significant Republican elements and democratic rights. The constitution of the Republic, they argue, ensures "equality of man and women before the law," "equal job opportunity," and individual rights "regardless of race, color, language, or creed." The constitution, indeed, implicitly incorporated the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. It is, perhaps, safe to argue that the constitutionalists' core argument resembles that of Vaclav Havel expressing his country's experience of democratic transition:

we took our country's constitution, its laws, and its international treaties – and among them, chiefly the Final Act of the Helsinki Agreement – very seriously, and we began to demand that the government respect them. That was how not only Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia did it, but also Solidarity in Poland, the Helsinki Committees in the Soviet Union, and opposition groups in the other communist countries. Those in power were surprised and caught off guard, and it was hard for them to justify the persecution of those who demanded nothing more than that the authorities respect the rules that they themselves had set."[781]

Havel also adds, "that way consists in a persistent effort to take those who invoke such declarations at their word, and to demand that their words amount to more than hollow sound. Such an approach usually provokes great astonishment and anger in rulers who are used to no one taking them at their word, and to no one having the courage to appeal to the real meaning of their words."[782] Post-totalitarian regimes violate democratic and human rights expressed in their own law. "Their hope," Havel argues, "is that no one will expose such violations and that no one will dare to shout out that the emperor has no clothes because his magnificent clothing is no more than an illusion."[783]

### ii. Republicanism: Beyond the vicious circle of constitutionalism and empowering civil society forces

By contrast, given the fall of the reformist regime and the failed experience of Islamic constitutionalism, Iran's Republican forces, either religious or secular, argue that the path to democracy is no longer that of constitutionalism. Although they vary in their strategies, Iran's Republicans remain united in appealing to civil society rather than the state. The first rather large and diverse category of Iran's republicans includes the dissident-jailed journalist Akbar Ganji, the outspoken reformist journalist Emadeddin

---

[781] Vaclav Havel, "The Emperor Has No Clothes,", Journal of Democracy 16.4 (2005) 5-8, p.6.

[782] Ibid

[783] Ibid, p.7

Baghi, the reformist cleric Mohsen Kadivar, a group of individuals tied to the coalition of the *Melli-Mazhabi*, and also some secular political activists or intellectuals living outside Iran.

The republican forces inside Iran have been systematically marginalized from the political process; they supported the reform movement but remained critical of the reformist government. They include the coalition of *Melli-Mazhabi* – a group consisting of the liberal Muslims of the Iran Liberation Movement, the circle of *Iran-e Farda* (a group of Muslim social-democrats and some followers of Ali Shariati) including individuals such as Ezzatollah Sahabi, Habibollah Peyman, and Hasan Yusefi-Eshkevari. The liberal secular parties such as the Party of the People of Iran (*Haezb-e Mellat-e Iran*), and the National Front (*Jebhe-ye Melli-e Iran*) have only a nominal existence. The secular left has no political party inside Iran but is often identified with such individuals as Naser Zarafshan and Fariborze Reis-Dana, among others. They all have played a significant part in the reform movement, but have been systematically excluded from the political process.

For Iran's republicans, to use Garton Ash's phrase, Khatami's reform was more comparable to "revisionism." Like Dubcek in 1968 Poland, Khatami tried to revise "the ideology on which the state is built." However, like Dubcek's "socialism with a human face," Khatami's "Khomeinism with human face" has failed. As a result, Iran's Republicans, like the Central European dissidents after the failure of the Prague Spring, believe that the path is no longer "ideological revisionism" or in-system reform. According to the Republican Emadeddin Baghi, the editor-in chief of the banned *Republican* (*Jomhoriyat*) daily, "what is needed now is not reform from above, within the

*mullah*-state – as Hajjarian still advocates – but organization from below, in civil society independent of the state." Similarly, for the dissident cleric Mohsen Kadivar, "democratic Khomeinism is like fried snowballs."[784]

The most outspoken and articulate individual among Republicans inside Iran is Akbar Ganji. Three years before the fall of the reformist regime, Akbar Ganji had challenged the strategy of constitutionalism or legalism in the first part of his 2002 *Republican Manifesto*. In 2005 Ganji's second part went even further. Given recent developments in reform and counter-reform activities Ganji argued that the Khomeinist state has degenerated into "sultanism." For Ganji, government positions in the Iranian state as in other sultanistic states "are personal 'properties' of the leader-for-life. In other words, government is the leader's private domain."[785] In post-revolutionary Iran, he suggests, "the supreme leader picks the members of the Council of Guardians, who choose the members of the Assembly of Experts – that is, the supreme leader indirectly picks those who are supposed to supervise and impeach him. Moreover, the autocrat is the commander-in-chief of the armed and security forces. So he does not feel threatened by the military. The ruling system in Iran is not totalitarian, but sultanistic."[786] For Ganji, "supporters of freedom must make it clear which kind of regime they are dealing with in Iran, and what type of process the transition from that kind of regime to democracy requires."[787] "Here, cooperation with the personal ruler and legitimization of his rule do not help the democratization process at all, but instead the democratization process is

---

[784] Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam." *New York Tim*, October 2005, available from <http://www.nybooks.com/contents/20051103>

[785] Akbar Ganji, "The Struggle against Sultanism," *Journal of Democracy* 16.4 (2005) 38-51, p. 44.

[786] Ibid

[787] Ibid, p. 45

facilitated by noncooperation and delegitimization."[788] Hence, "the path that the reformists have taken does not lead to a democratic system." The reformists, however, "build domestic and international legitimacy for the tyrannical ruler by cooperating with him."[789] In Ganji's view, noncooperation implies non-participation in elections, because "rigged semidemocratic elections provide the window dressing of democratic legitimacy for tyrannical systems."[790] The path for transition to democracy in Iran, Ganji argues, is an active civil society with "truly independent associations" and "organized citizens" who practice "civil disobedience."[791] The in-system reformists in Iran, Ganji argues,

> think that the only method of transition to democracy is to penetrate into the government, turn it into a dual government, create a balance of power between the two sides, and win an agreement on the transition to democracy. Even if this were true, the society must have a strong democratic opposition movement in order to force the regime to compromise and negotiate through demonstrations, strikes, election boycotts, and the like (pressure from below and bargaining from above, to use Saeed Hajjarian's metaphors). So even for reformists who want to play the role of regime moderates by taking part in elections and, if the conservatives allow, creating a dual government, it would be advantageous to let others establish a strong movement for demanding democracy through noncooperation, boycott, and delegitimization in order to make negotiation and compromise possible. Without pressure from below, there will be no bargaining from above.[792]

Is Iran currently capable of taking a peaceful revolutionary path similar to those taken in post-1980's Eastern Europe? Ganji sees hope in recent non-violent and democratic revolutions including Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution, Belgrade's Revolution, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Yellow or Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. The critics, Ganji argues, suggest that today's Iran remains far from a peaceful transition, because the regime is capable of turning it

---

[788] Ganji, *"The Struggle against Sultanism,"* p.45
[789] Ibid, p. 42
[790] Ibid, p.43
[791] Ibid, p. 42
[792] Ibid

into bloodshed. "This claim," Ganji argues, "is based on two important but unsupported premises. According to the first premise, the ruling regime has the power to inflict widespread repression, and the new international and internal conditions allow it to do so. According to the second premise, the ruling system in Iran is worse than those of the former Eastern bloc."[793] Ganji then raises two fundamental questions: one theoretical and one practical. The former is whether the Islamic Republic is reformable or nonreformable: "If the ruling system is so unreformable that it cannot tolerate even peaceful demonstrations by its opponents [then a] nonreformable system has to be set aside."[794] The practical question asks what the path for transition to democracy in Iran is. The paths taken by the in-system reformists, he argues, have failed and need to be replaced by the new ones. "The uneven path to freedom will be opened by our efforts. Freedom is not free."[795] Yet, these efforts are peaceful; "the limit of noncooperation is civil disobedience, not violence. "Violence," he stresses, "is the red line of the republican democrats."[796] Hence, Iran's path for democratic transition should be taken by using methods such as "hunger strikes, election boycotts, protests, noncooperation holding referendums, civil disobedience, and delegitimization."[797]

There is a partial truth in Ganji's argument; indeed, the core argument is partly accurate. The in-system reformists failed to transform the state; they underestimated the power of civil society and overestimated the effect of persuasion and negotiations with the clerical authority. The twin strategy of "pressure from below, negotiation from above" remained ineffective because the reformists sacrificed the first part for the second;

---

[793] Ganji, *"The Struggle against Sultanism,"* p. 48
[794] Ibid, p. 49
[795] Ibid, p. 51
[796] Ibid, p. 50
[797] Ibid, pp, 49-50

they significantly underestimated the obstacles inherent in the structure of the state. Yet, they equally underestimated the significance of soft-power driving civil society. However, Ganji's argument can be challenged in two significant ways: first, in theory, Ganji's argument that the state has transformed into sultanism is neither theoretically nor empirically accurate. There may be some truth to this: the *vali-ye faqih* Khamenei has clearly attempted to expand his personal influence over the state apparatus and eliminate all potential rivals. This partially corresponds to Alfred Stepan's argument that in sultanism there is no "room in the 'household' staff of the sultan for a moderate player who publicly negotiates the demise of his employer." Moreover, "neither civil society nor political society has enough autonomy to enable a publicly organized democratic opposition to develop sufficient negotiating capacity for it to be a full four-player in any pact-transition."[798] Nonetheless, the state still remains far from sultanism and lacks key elements of sultanism. "In sultanism," as discussed in the first chapter, "the private and the public are fused, there is a strong tendency towards family power and dynastic succession, there is no distinction between a state career and personal services to the ruler; there is a lack of rationalized impersonal ideology."[799] The Iranian state today, as discussed earlier, is clearly short of the above features. In today's Iran, as Garton Ash put it, "no one knows exactly where the limits are. As a result, there is both a remarkable freedom of intellectual debate and a permanent undercurrent of fear." In other words, the system with several centers of power "adds an extra element of uncertainty."[800]

Second, in practice Ganji's strategy of civil disobedience through all kinds of peaceful paths remains impractical. In today's Iran the room for independent civil society

---

[798] Alfred Stepan, *Arguing comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 170
[799] Ibid, pp. 169-170
[800] Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam," *New York Times*, October 2005

associations is limited. NGO's and universities are constrained. "Theoretical discussion of the merits of democracy," as Garton Ash observes," is possible; practical criticism of the Guardianship of the Jurist is definitely not."[801] Furthermore, the Republicans, including Ganji himself, called upon the public to boycott the 2005 presidential election and yet they failed to make this an effective and organized movement. Moreover, the theoretical and practical components of Ganji's argument seem to be contradictory. If the state is sultanistic then the path out of sultanism, as the history and practice of democratization suggest, is hardly a peaceful civil disobedience; rather, sultanistic regimes are exposed to violent overthrow.[802]

Finally, in exile, the republican forces are divided. A segment of the republican forces, represented by the residual part of the *Tudeh* Party, the *Fadain* Organization (Majority), sought an alliance with the in-system reformists. They, as Saeed Rahnema observes, failed "to appreciate the simple fact that as long as the clerical regime enjoys a monopoly of power, it does not need and will not seek an alliance with any other force,"[803] particularly the left. Even if this happens, the left will not take the lion's share of power and "will be used in the service of the state."[804] Others include radical organizations such as the *Fedian* Organization (Minority), *Rah-e Kargar*, *Peykar*, *Komoleh*, among others. Unlike the first group, they call for an immediate socialist revolution, but lack a clear political strategy, institutional strength, or effective communication with a social class who are expected to make such a revolution. There

---

[801] Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam," *New York Times*, October 2005
[802] See Alfred Stepan, *Arguing comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)
[803] H. Moghissi and S. Rahnema, "The Working Class and the Islamic State in Iran," in Stephanie, Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), p. 295.
[804] Ibid

exist a number of independent individuals among the secular and progressive Muslims in exile who adopt a more balanced and realistic view. They reject both of the above extreme political trends, acknowledge the weakness of the opposition, and put their faith in civil society forces. The opposition in exile has been marginalized and has therefore no effective role in the current movement.[805]

A group of republican forces inside and outside Iran recently called for a national referendum imposed on the Islamic Republic to replace the existing constitution with a democratic one. The argument implies that the Islamic Republic's constitution remains the most significant barrier to democratization. This strategy, as Mashayekhi and most Iranian Republicans observe, remains "populist, naïve, and impractical; it could only become effective in conditions of widespread political crisis, when the regime can no longer rule." Moreover, "political change for democratization and projects in search of 'regime change'" remain two different goals. "The latter falsely assume that *any* method of change in Iran will inevitably lead to democracy. Hence, they skip the vital task of connecting with civil society forces, and instead attempt to mobilize the faceless 'people' for a national referendum."[806]

### 3.2. 5. Civil Society and Class Elements

Democratization is never fully dependent on the positions of liberalizers. A successful democratic transition requires a meeting of elites and civil society forces with their interaction providing the dynamism that may draw reformists to accept surprising

---

[805] There is also a non-democratic opposition in exile, which holds an extremely diverse political and ideological orientation: The monarchists on the far-right and the Worker-Communist Party of Iran (WPI) on the far left. A radical militant group of the People's *Mojahedin Khalq* Organization (MKO) has now degenerated into a totalitarian political sect and remains extremely marginalized. They all argue that the Islamic Republic is not reformable, call for the overthrow of the regime and are inclined to receive extensive foreign support to achieve this goal.

[806] Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "A new era for Iran's democracy," *Open Democracy* 16 - 6 – 2005

degrees of change. But the reformists in Iran failed to organize, mobilize, meet, and appeal to societal actors. They neither encouraged nor guided societal actors to take such a unique opportunity in the post-Khomeini era. In this section we will examine the failure of the reformists' organizational policy, which created a gap between the elite and populace. We will also look at the complex position of social classes with respect to the reformists and its impact on the fall of the reformist government. As before, we will see that society presented the reformists with significant constraints, as well as opportunities that they failed to pursue.

### i. A new political class and uneven development

Like the Pahlavi regime, the Khomeinist state is an oil-centered rentier state. This rentier state with a broker (*dallal*) economy has produced a "new class" whose interests and survival rest on the status quo. This new state-sponsored-class controlled the socio-economic policy of the Republic and played a central role in counter-reform activities. The reformists failed to challenge this class, to stop worsening class divisions, and, therefore, lost their social support.

Iran's complex socio-economic status under the reformist regime deserves a closer look since it contributed to the fall of the reformist government. By the early 2000's, oil prices had increased from $10 in 1998 to $27 in 2000, and "oil revenues jumped from less than $10 billion in 1998 to $28 billion in 2001 and to over $30 billion in 2002. Foreign reserves rose to $4.8 billion, eliminating $30 billion of external debts, stabilizing the currency, and improving the country's creditworthiness. Iran became one of the few countries to have no foreign debt."[807] With that revenue military expenses took

---

[807] Abrahamian,"Empire Strikes Back," p.134

less than 2 percent of the GNP and the liberalization of the economy begun in the second regime continued: the Expediency Council, chaired by the former president of the second regime, passed a bill allowing foreign companies to own as much as a 100 percent share in some sectors of the economy. Moreover, as Ervand Abrahamian observes,

> the gross national product grew 6 percent in 2000, 5 percent in 2001, and 6.8 percent in 2002 – the non-oil sector increased nearly 8 percent in 2002-2003. The tax revenue jumped 24 percent in 2002. The unemployment rate fell from 16 percent to 12.5 percent. Inflation was reduced from 30 percent per year throughout the war years to less than 13 percent in 2000. For the first time since 1979, capital flew into the country both from expatriates and from foreign investors. The International Monetary Fund – hardly a friend of the Islamic Republic – gave Iran high marks in 2002 for its economic growth and fiscal reforms.[808]

The social reform, too, changed the country. According to Abrahamian, "by the early 2000's, most villages, not to mention towns (which constituted 65 percent of the country's population), had electricity, schools, health clinics, roads, and running water. The UN estimates that 94 percent of the population now has access to health services and safe water." By 2002, the literacy rate was 84 percent in general and 97 percent for ages six to twenty-nine. Infant mortality and population growth, respectively, declined to 25 percent in 2002 and 1.2 percent in 2003. Life expectancy increased to 69 percent in 2002. By 2002, the number of university students increased to 1,700,000. By 2000, most farmers had radios, televisions and refrigerators, and the "regime distributed over 630,000 hectares of confiscated land to peasants."[809] By 2003, Abrahamian argues, over two million Iranians used the internet, "women formed 63 percent of the incoming

---

[808] International Monetary Fund, *Staff Report on Iran* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2003), quoted in Abrahamian,"Empire Strikes Back," p.134
[809] Abrahamian,"Empire Strikes Back," pp. 135-136

university students, 54 percent of all college students, 45 percent of doctors, 25 percent of government employees, and 13 percent of the general labor force."[810]

Yet the complete picture of Iran's socio-economic development in the third regime remains more complicated. The complex relation of political and economic development is reciprocal, not deterministic. Yet given the nature of Iran as an autocratic clerical rentier state, Khatami and the in-system reformists truly believed economic development in the absence of political development to be unsustainable. The dominant mercantilist-economic relation established since the second regime required the political status quo since it was beneficial to the *mullah*-merchants coalition. The reformists understood that a sustainable economic development required political development to establish a transparent and accountable political system. Ansari argues that in theory the reformists believed that "for the economy to grow, it had to be freed, not only from government restrictions (as the conservatives demanded) but from the vagaries of the mercantile bourgeoisie (a reality they obviously rejected)."[811]

In August 1998 Khatami outlined his economic policy, noting that the economy is "diseased." He argued that "although we attach importance to science and scientific theories, we must not forget that the economy is subject to a variety of cultural, social, political, climatic and geographical conditions, and we must approach economic problems with a socio-economic outlook." Next to the environmental issue, Khatami argued, "our second policy is to give priority to social justice." This is to suggest, Khatami added, that if "under certain conditions there is a contradiction between economic growth and social justice, then the policy of the government is to favor social

---

[810] Ibid
[811] Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, p. 169

justice even at the cost of slowing down economic growth." He repeatedly suggested that the Iranian economy "must gain the trust of the private sector for cooperation and investment;" it must also "reduce and eliminate monopolies, both in goods manufacturing and distribution stages."[812]

Nonetheless, Khatami's economic policy remained less clear on details of implementation. He only suggested that "the economy would have to grow by some 6.7 per cent annually if the estimated 15 million jobs needed were to be created."[813] This goal, Khatami argued, "would require a doubling of the ratio of investment to GDP from 16 to 30 per cent."[814] The investment, however, required stability in politics and transparency in the economy, both of which were badly needed under the domination of the *mullah*-merchant coalition blessed by economic subsides from petro-dollars and political support from the office of the *velayat-e faqih*. A meaningful economic reform would indeed challenge the financial power of the hardliners and was resisted. Facing these obstacles, the in-system reformists, in spite of their original agenda, gradually left the economy to the conservatives and placed more emphasis on political development. This happened in the first phase of the reform (1997-2000). Given the nature of the Iranian state, this strategy brought only relative success. The economic source of the hardliners' power remained almost untouched, providing them with stronger positions in politics. Hence, in the second phase (2000-2005), the in-system reformists were gradually forced to give up their main goal of political development. The more the reformists stepped back in politics, the more the economy deteriorated. In the end, the reformists,

---

[812]BBC SWB ME/3298 MED/4-11, 6 Aug. 1998;Iranian TV, 2 Aug. 1998, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, p. 172

[813] Ibid

[814] BBC SWB ME/3274 MED/3,9 July 1998; Iranian TV, 7July 1998, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, p. 173

and reform in general, lost both economic and political ground. The economic and political passivity on the part of the reformists brought on apathy on the part of the public.

The negative consequences of the reformist economic policies on the daily life of the lower classes, the urban poor in particular, created major disappointment and the prospect of growing protests. These crises had structural causes inherited from policies applied in the second regime.[815] The reformist regime, in effect, pursued a mild version of the economic policy of the second regime, a policy which had brought down the Regime of Reconstruction. The reformist regime, in effect, tolerated crony-clerical corruption and overlooked several important urban riots among the urban poor and the veterans of the Iran-Iraq War. By March 2002, Iran's foreign debt stood at $20 billion. By year 2000, 20-23 percent of the urban and rural households lived under the absolute poverty line,[816] and the vast majority needed two jobs. By 2001 inflation ranged from 20 to 50 percent, and more than 4 million Iranians remained unemployed. Each year more than 750,000 individuals entered the labor market, while the economy offered only 300,000 new jobs annually.[817]

The reformist economic policy failed to stop the worsening class divisions. As an oil-centered rentier state, the Iranian economy was, and still remains, deeply dependent on both oil and a dollar economy. This means that, writes Ansari, "there were stark differences in the standards of living between those with access to hard currency

[815] This is of course not to deny that "on the whole, the average Iranians, especially workers and peasants, are better off than their partners had been before the Islamic Revolution. This may help explain why the student protests of 1999, 2000, and 2003 – caused by the closing down of newspapers – did not spark off nationwide disturbances." See Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back," pp. 135-136

[816] See Nili et al, "*Barrasi-e tahavolaat-e faghr, tozi'e daramad, va refaah-e ejtemaa'ei; Sazeman-e modiriyat va barnaameh-rizi-e keshvar*; 1379 (Teheran, in Farsi).

[817] The Iranian Statistic Centre, November 2001.By 2002, Tehran alone had 20,000 professional prostitutes, mostly young girls hired by the criminal gangs; see *Entekhab* daily, Jan. 2002.

and those whose income was denominated in rials. Every time the rial was devalued, the cost of living for most Iranians rose just as dramatically as it fell for those with foreign bank accounts."[818] The gap between the poor living by rials and the rich living by dollars emerged in the second regime, and the power of the new patron class, which emerged during and after the Iran-Iraq war, became consolidated. This "New Class", to use Milovan Djilas's classic concept, continued to enjoy its privileged position in the third regime. The "*agha-zadeh*" (clerical noble-born) became a common name attributed to the Ayatollah's sons and close relatives, blessed by patrimonial politics and privileged by the rents received from formal and informal sources.[819] Moreover, the emergence of this "New Class" was largely linked to the development of the revolutionary and religious foundations (*Bonyads*).

The *Bonyads* are multifunctional organizations established after the 1979 Revolution, or the old religious foundations controlled by the clerical establishment. Their tasks included trade and manufacturing, social welfare, and banking. The *Bonyads* are partially dependent on the government for portions of their annual budget and yet remain tax-exempt and unaccountable to the government. They are directly supervised by the *vali-ye faqih* whose conservative-bazaari allies are in full control of these foundations. The *Bonyad-e Astan-e Qods-e Razavi*, an extremely rich and powerful foundation attached to the shrine of the eighth Shiite Imam in Mashhad, has an annual budget of some $2 billion.[820] The *Bonyad-e Panzdah-e Khordad* (Fifteenth of Khordad

---

[818] Ali A. Ansari, Iran, *Islam and Democracy*, p. 168

[819] The case of *Al-Makaseb* remains one among many cases, which revealed the corrupt and crony-clerical relations: Naser Vaez-Tabasi, the son of the powerful Ayatollah Vaez-Tabasi, was questioned for $100 billion tomans but eventually the case was closed with no result. The case also involved sons of the Ayatollahs Moqtadaie, Dori-Najafabadi, and Rastegari and yet remains closed.

[820] Hooshang Amirahmadi, "Bunyad," *Encyclopaedia of Modern Islamic World*, vol. 1, p. 235.

Foundation) was able to create "a network of patron-client relationships" by providing social welfare to the poor and lower-middle class families; it, for example, sponsored some 471,886 households in 1991.[821] Likewise, the *Bonyad-e Shahid*, (Martyr's Foundation) and the *Komitteh Emdad-e Imam Khomeini* (Imam Khomeini's Relief Committee) provide social welfare to the revolutionary martyrs' families and the underclass populations. The former offers full support to 230,000 families[822] and the latter provides full support to over 1.7 million unemployed or poor working people. It also provides health service to over 4.3 million people and grants for the education of over 769,000 students.[823] The most important of all, however, is the *Bonyad-e Mostazafan va Janbazan* (Foundation for the Oppressed and the Crusaders), which possess all properties of the Pahlavi family and friends including, but not limited to, commerce, industry, mines, agriculture, housing, five-star hotels, film companies and other cultural industries. This *Bonyad*, the foundation's director claimed, earned $300 million in profits between 1989-1993 and some $100 million in profits in 1994.[824] "The *Bonyad*'s budget for 1990 was 80 billion rials, of which nearly half was contributed by the government, and the 1991 budget was expected to be 210 billion rials, with the government providing 20 billion."[825] The *Bonyad* owns 120 large factories and its assets

---

[821] The *Bonyad* was established in 1979 to commemorate the popular uprising followed by Ayatollah Khomeini's speech against the Shah in the fifteenth of Khordad 1342 (June 1963). This *Bonyad*, following Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa*, offered a sum of $2 million to anyone who assassinates the author of *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie. See *Iran, Budget and Plan Organization (Salnameh-ye Amari-ye Keshvar)* (Tehran, 1992), p. 218; quoted in Farhad Kazemi, "Civil Society and Iranian Politics," in Augustus Richard Norton ed. *Civil Society in the Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 145.

[822] Iran Statistical Centre, *Iran Statistical Yearbook* (Tehran: 1376/1997), p. 488.

[823] *Fa'aliyathaye Komitteh Emdad-e Imam Khomeini* (Imam Khomeini's Relief Committee Activities) in *Iran Statistical Yearbook* (Tehran: 1376/1997), pp. 112-19

[824] *Economist*, 25 September 1998, p. 54 and *Iran Times*, 23 August 1994, p. 4; quoted in Farhad Kazemi, "Civil Society and Iranian Politics," in Augustus Richard Norton ed. *Civil Society in the Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 147.

[825] *Resalat*, October 6, 1990, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 45

are $12 billion.[826] In 1997, the *Bonyad* provided full and permanent support to over 325,000 people.[827] In 1990, the *Bonyad* donated 6 billion rials to Imam Khomein's Relief Committee, another foundation controlled by the traditional-conservatives headed by the leader of the *Mo'talefeh-ye Islami* Party, Habibollah Asgar-Owladi.[828] The crony-clerical connection saved the *Bonyad*'s former director, the famous conservative Morteza Rafiqdost, from a 123-billion-tomans scandal in 1995, though his brother and his friend were respectively sentenced with life-in prison and death. In sum, the post-revolutionary multifaceted foundations (*Bonyads*) have been a major drain on the economy. All the *Bonyads*' budgets, which remain under the direct control of the *vali-ye faqih*, are estimated to hold a gross annual income of almost half of the state budget.[829] They are accountable not to the Republican institutions but to the office of the *vali-ye faqih*. As a result, they have easily monopolized trade and promoted systematic corruption. Given their billions of dollar of assets and profits, writes Farhad Kazemi, the *Bonyads* "have functioned as a serious autonomous force not only in the economy but also in the political and social life of the country."[830]

### ii. Social class and social forces

The reformist government faced a number of challenges not only from the political class of *"agha-zadeh"* (clerical noble-born), but from different social classes. In this section we will briefly look at the complex relation between the reformist

---

[826] *Economist*, 25 September 1998, p. 54 and *Iran Times*, 23 August 1994, p. 4; quoted in Farhad Kazemi, "Civil Society and Iranian Politics," in Augustus Richard Norton ed. *Civil Society in the Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 147.

[827] Iran Statistical Centre, *Iran Statistical Yearbook* (Tehran: 1376/1997), p. 489.

[828] *Ettela'at*, October 6, 1990, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 45

[829] Jahangir Amuzegar, *Iran's Economy under the Islamic Republic*, p. 100

[830] Farhad Kazemi, "The Precarious Revolution: Unchanging Institutions and the Fate of Reform in Iran," *Journal of International Affairs*, 57, no.1 (Fall 2003): 81-95, p. 88.

government and Iran's social forces who initially supported the reformists but eventually became disappointed with Khatami's government.

Civil society forces cannot be reduced to social classes; yet, the position of each social class can make a difference in a democratic transition. First and foremost, one major social support of the reformist government was the youth and women. With almost two-third of its seventy million under thirty years of age, Iran, an old country with over 2,500 years history, "is also a remarkably young country."[831] It is estimated that there are million men and a million women attending universities. Post-secondary education and internet and satellite television have made Iranian youth well-informed about national and global issues. But the youth has remained most vulnerable to unemployment, inflation, and economic instability. Official estimates put unemployment at some 16 percent, with much higher rates among educated young Iranians.[832] As a result, the reformist regime gradually lost the support of a significant segment of youth.

Second, rural poverty and unemployment were, and still remain, a source of ever growing rural migration to the urban areas, increasing the number of the urban poor and millions of unemployed. These urban poor have constituted the major part of the *Basiji* militia, which is organized by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and controlled by the conservative hardliners. Because the reformists failed to communicate with this group, they ironically remained a source of organized counter-reform activities.

---

[831] In the 1980s, the authorities "encouraged a baby boom, denouncing the decadent Western practice of birth control and calling for mass procreation to replace the country's million martyrs in the Iran-Iraq war." Ironically, the authorities called these children "soldiers of the hidden imam."! See Ash, 2005.

[832] Central Bank of Iran (*Bank Markazi Iran*) data (Tehran: 2003/1383). According to the World Bank, Iran needs growth rates above 7.5 percent to reduce unemployment rate to 10 percnt by 2010. See World Bank, "Iran: Medium Term Framework for Transition – Converting Oil Wealth to Developmnet," *Report No. 25848-IRN, A Country Economic Memorandum*, Social and Economic Developmnet Group (Washington: April 30, 2003).

Petro-dollars and the revenues produced by the *Bonyads* enabled counter-reform forces to buy loyalty of a group of the urban poor.

Third, as James Mahoney argues, the history and practice of democratization suggest that "working-class strength is positively associated with democracy," but its strength depends on its organizational ability to form coalitions with other class actors.[833] Wage workers in post-revolutionary Iran constitute only 27 percent of the working population (4 million out of 14.5 million). "In addition to its small size, the Iranian working class is highly differentiated and segmented. For example, the industrial (manufacturing) workers, the most politically significant section of the Iranian working class, are scattered in over 360,000 industrial establishments, 91.6 percent of which are workshops of less than 5 workers and employees."[834] Moreover, "the sexual segregation of the workplace" is another disadvantage of the Iranian working class, creating more obstacles to the organization of this class. Female industrial workers "constitute only 5.2 percent of all wage workers" and are divided into three types of workplaces: "large industries, small workshops with less than 10 workers, and women working at home (piece workers)."[835] Furthermore, the post-revolutionary polity either destroyed the independent labor unions or replaced them with state-sponsored workers' and employees' councils (Islamic *Showras*) to isolate and indoctrinate the working class.[836] Hence, although subject to economic hardship and larger than the previous Iranian waves, Iran's

---

[833] The working class, as James Mahoney observes, might not work for democracy if the labour movement "enjoys a privileged status position within the society of a country with an authoritarian regime." This position, of course, has no implication In the Iranian case. James Mahoney, "*Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research*," p. 165. For further discussions, see D. Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and J. D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992)

[834] H. Moghissi and S. Rahnema, "The Working class and the Islamic state in Iran," p. 285

[835] Ibid, pp. 287-88

[836] Ibid, pp. 288-90

4 million wage workers, excluding the salaried middle class,[837] remained ineffective in the recent democratic transition. The strict control by the state over all labor organizations, and the reformists' inability to communicate with the working class or help them create independent organizations contributed to the growing gap between the working class and the reformist government. Iran's working class, as Garton Ash put it, could have hardly done what "Poland's did in the Solidarity movement twenty-five years ago."[838]

Fourth, the rich and modern businessmen have remained critical of the Islamic Republic in private but dependent on it for their businesses, and formed commercial partnerships with the ruling *mullah*-merchant coalition. As in other societies, Iran's upper class places its economic interest first. Because the economy is still controlled by the bazaari-merchants, many businessmen have chosen to remain junior partners of the bazaari rivals with some economic benefits rather than junior partners of pro-democratic forces. This class supported the 1997 reform movement and remained supportive during the first phase of the reform (1997-2000), given the boost in the economy with higher prices for Iran's oil exports and growing foreign investment. But when the reformist regime failed to bring about the political stability required for sustainable economic growth and foreign investment, they soon turned their back. According to the World Bank, Iran's share of global foreign direct investment remained only 0.003 percent in 2002.[839] Even worse, some segments of the private sector established links with the conservatives to maximize their economic interests. "In the words of reformist strategist

---

[837] H. Moghissi and S. Rahnema, "The Working class and the Islamic state in Iran," pp. 280-301
[838] Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam," *New York Times*, October 2005
[839] World Developmnet Indicators, *World Bank*, 2002.

Said Hajjarian, the private sector is now part of the problem facing democracy in Iran."[840]

Thus, this class hardly constituted a social backbone for the recent democratic transition.

Fifth, Iran's urban middle class remains the most complicated case. The middle class, as Rueschemeyer argues, has shown its inconsistency over democratization.[841] The interest of any class needs to be understood within a particular socio-political and historical context. In the post-revolutionary period, 40 percent of the working population are the "old middle class made up of the self-employed and unpaid family workers" and "no less than 24 percent" (3.5 million), excluding 2 percent "senior officials," are "new middle class" consisting of managers, professionals, and "salaried clerical and retail employees."[842] A sizable number of the traditional middle class is also the merchant class. The merchants and the *mullahs* have historically been allies since the past century, and worked together against the political establishment. The politics of the Islamic Republic has divided the two groups into forces for and against change. A segment of the traditional middle class with ties to the clerical authority has remained on the whole the most unfavorable social force to democratization. Like Iran's upper class, even some pro-reform bazaaris have often picked their immediate economic interests rather than long term comprehensive interests. They have worked with the state-sponsored bazaaris to maximize their economic interests. The modern urban-middle class has remained critical of the Islamic Republic, but dependent on it for its daily economic life.

The ninth presidential election results, in 2005, partly reflected the complex picture of social class in post-revolutionary Iran. The election results suggest the

---

[840] Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," p. 13
[841] See D. Rueschemeyer, Stephens and J. D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992)
[842] H. Moghissi and S. Rahnema, "The Working class and the Islamic state in Iran," pp. 280-301

following lessons: first, the centre in Iran's political spectrum remains "ideologically to the right and economically to the left," contrary to where the reformists thought it was.[843] Second, some segments of the poor cast their vote for the moderate-reformist Karrubi, and the hardliner Ahmadinejad who spoke about economic inequality and social justice. Some segments of the middle class turned out to vote for the reformist Moin, the pragmatist-conservatives Rafsanjani and Qalibaf. Yet the overwhelming majority of the twenty million who did not cast their vote belonged to the poor and the middle class. The lesson here is that class as a variable alone cannot entirely expose the dynamics of reform and counter-reform activities. Iran is a divided society where some social classes identify closely with the establishment, while others have lost faith in the system. Third, like other late-industrializing countries, social elements of democracy in Iran remain an essential part of democratization. Economic privatization without social justice brings about economic inequality, which results in support for the populist agenda at the polls.

A significant number of Iran's social forces are dissatisfied with the overall policies of the Islamic Republic. And yet they oppose the politics of regime change declared by the Bush administration. Iranian nationalism and the American difficulties in Iraq have contributed to this reaction, transforming diverse class interests into a united national interest. The position of the youth and women, the most dynamic social force in contemporary Iran, is a case in point. They are disenchanted with socio-cultural policies, dissatisfied with the economic situation, and disappointed with the politics of the Islamic Republic. Yet they sought an Iranian solution to such Iranian problems. As Garton Ash observes, the U.S. "would be making a huge mistake if it concluded that these young

---

[843] Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," p. 16

Iranians are automatic allies of the West."[844] This will bring us to the impact of transnational factor on Iran's democratic transition.

### 3.2.6. An active civil society left to languish

Sheri Berman has established the insufficiency of civil society's democratic potential in its own right. As she points out, there is a need for crucial intermediaries between state and society – such as parties – in order to fulfill civil society's democratic promise. [845] In Iran, the willingness to appeal to society was much greater than the ability to cultivate social support and provide it with institutional direction. The President of Iran's reformist government regime, Mohammad Khatami, repeatedly insisted on the rights of the people and the empowerment of civil society. "In his terse inauguration speech in 1997, Khatami used the word 'people' more than 30 times and made not a single reference to the *velayat-e faqih*."[846] For Khatami, "the people must learn to defend their freedom. One of the main ways to do this is precisely through the formation of parties, groups and civil associations, and civil institutions in society, [but] it is not up to the government to establish parties; the people must do these themselves."[847] Nonetheless, the in-system reformists, including President Khatami, were inclined to ignore the fact that "actors in civil society," as Larry Diamond put it, "need the protection of an institutional legal order to guarantee their autonomy and freedom of action."[848] The

---

[844] Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam," *New York Tim*, October 2005

[845] Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49 no.3 (1997): 401-429

[846] President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami's Inaugural Speech to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Tehran: n. n., 1997), quoted in Mohsen M. Milani, "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran," p. 46.

[847] BBC SWB ME/3344 MED/14, 29 Sep. 1998; Iranian TV, 26 Sept. 1998, quoted in Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy*, p. 142

[848] Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society Towards Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy*, (1994) 5, 3, p. 6.

in-system reformists hardly succeeded in providing a sustained institutional legal order to protect the independent political institutions and civil society actors. More importantly, they in effect failed to establish a grassroots political party and institutionalize the reform movement.

The most significant party of the in-system reformists, the Islamic Iran Participation Front, was established in December, 1998, by prominent members of the populist-revolutionaries loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini.[849] The party, in effect, remained a party of in-system-reformist elites, not a grassroots political party inclusive of all Iranian democrats. More importantly, the democratic opposition — even the most peaceful and loyal opposition, Iran's Liberation Movement — was excluded from party politics, given the lack of legal protection for free political activities. Moreover, Khatami himself was unable, or unwilling, to form a political party of his own. As a result, the people who voted for change, "having no means to keep themselves engaged," remained inactive and looked for "their president to bring about the changes for which they voted."[850]

Iran's reformist political parties remained active only for the elections, after which they left their constituencies to their own ways with no effective efforts to establish grassroots organizations. Three years after the victory of the reformists, Akbar Ganji, the leading dissident journalist, argued that "if 30 million Iranian citizens go to the ballot boxes and send democratic reformists to the parliament, it will be possible to

---

[849] Paradoxically, in the words of a New York Times correspondent, "the most prominent advocates for opening the country...and institutionalizing democratic values were either hostage-takers or supporters of the seizure" of the American Embassy in 1979, see Susan Sachs, "Many Iranian Conservatives Lose Seats," *New York Times*, 23 February 2000, A10, quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, p. 236

[850] Shaul Bakhash, "Iran's Remarkable Election,, pp. 122-123

reform all laws contrary to human rights, civil rights, and the constitution."[851] Nonetheless, like other in-system reformists, the earlier Ganji, as opposed to the later Ganji, downplayed the significance and urgency of organized grassroots and inclusive political parties and social organizations to keep 30 million Iranian citizens in the front and the conservative-hardliners at bay. The first evidence appeared in the 2002 second municipal elections, where the unorganized and unsatisfied supporters of the Reformist regime turned way from the ballots.[852] This was followed by two major defeats in the 2004 parliamentary elections and the 2005 presidential elections.

For the state, Khatami played the role of the "office coordinator" or, as Khatami himself put it, *tadarokatchi*, given the uneven balance between the power and responsibilities vested in the president. His approach in dealing with his own twin bills, described by Khatami as reform's minimum demands, is revealing. The Guardian Council vetoed Khatami's twin bills – one for expanding the president's power vis-à-vis the *vali-ye faqih*, and the other limiting the electoral power of the Guardian Council – and yet he chose not to mobilize the electorate but to continue compromising with the ruling elites.

For the reform movement, too, he played the role of a footman because he was unable or unwilling to lead the democratic movement. Khatami failed to transform its electoral soft power into an organized and powerful force to promote democracy. It is legitimate to suggest that reform's leadership remained behind the public. By 2003, 94

---

[851] Akbar Ganji, Asr-e Azadegan (Tehran), 15 February 2000, quoted in L. Boroumand and L Boroumand, "Is Iran Democratizing? Reform at the Impasse," p. 143.

[852] President Khatami held local and municipal elections in 1999, the first in post-revolutionary Iran, which contributed to greater participation of the people, stronger civil society, and decentralization of power. More than 23.6 million or 64.5 percent of the eligible voters cast their ballots. The reformists won 71 percent and the hard-liner conservatives received 14.5 percent of the seats. In the 2002 second municipal elections, however, the reformists lost in major cities and the conservatives won with an extremely low turnout. *Hamshahri*, March 15, 1999.

percent of the people wanted major reforms and 71 percent wanted a nationwide referendum to expand the reformers' power and limit the power of counter-reform.[853] In June 2003 even some of the in-system reformists openly demanded a referendum. In their open letter to the *vali-ye faqih*, 127 *Majles* deputies argued that "given the current situation, we can conceive of only two alternatives: either a fall into a dictatorship; or a rise into the democracy intended by the constitution ... We cannot claim that the Iraqi people should have the right to hold a referendum yet deny the same right for our own Iranian people."[854]

Hence, the reformist leadership lacked seasoned, serious character and an active approach in mobilizing civil society. Mohammad Khatami, a principled politician, was also a reluctant president and a hesitant reformist leader; he thus remained unable and unwilling to take the leadership of the movement. The reformist leadership suffered from too much elitism, failed to mobilize the people for a democratic cause, lost its electoral social support, and remained unsuccessful in turning a huge wave of popular discontent into a sustained democratic system. The leadership chose to mobilize the people only on election days; it relied on negotiations from above and distanced itself from the people. The reformist leadership employed passive and elitist strategies such as "deterrence through active calmness" without the active involvement of civil society forces, which reinforced the status quo and strengthened the authoritarian forces. The lack of a clear strategy and the absence of the authoritative leadership led to the reformists' inability to agree on either a boycott or a single presidential candidate in the 2005 ninth presidential

---

[853] *Economist*, January 16, 2003.
[854] "Majles Deputies, "Open Letter to the Leader," May 24, 2003, <www. Gooyanews.org>, quoted in Abrahamian, "Empire Strikes Back," p. 132

elections. In the end, ironically, weak leadership on the part of the reformists turned them into scapegoats for the regime's failures over the past three decades.

The reformist organizational strategy suffered from a number of shortcomings. First, the reformist parties remained parties of the elites. They lacked the strong, grassroots, and inclusive organizations required for a successful public mobilization. The parties consisted of extremely diverse, though limited, circles and constituencies: they included the reformist clerics organized in the *Majma-e Rouhanioun-e mobarez* (the Militant Clerics Society), an extremely closed circle of the former populist-revolutionaries organized in the *Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Enghelab-e Islami* (the Islamic Revolution Mojahedin Organization), a loose coalition of the state's bureaucrats and pragmatist-politicians organized in the *Kargozaran-e Sazandagi-ye Iran* (Iran's Servants of the Construction), and a small number of progressive reformists organized in the *Jebhe-ye Mosharekat-e Iran-e Islami* (the Islamic Iran Participation Front). They all, in spite of their diversity, remained elitist political organizations incapable of public mobilization. The reformists' central motto, "Iran for all Iranians," did very little to establish a political party for all Iranians.

Second, the reformists failed to communicate with different social constituencies, and limited their efforts to attract segments of the middle class. They either ignored or downplayed the significant role of the lower classes in general and the working class in particular. They did little to mobilize the people in the mosques and other religious centers. As Iran's modern history suggests, the modern intellectuals and elites have had difficulties in communication with the average people. Because they are urbanized and educated, their immediate concerns remain much more relevant to their immediate social

class and less to the grassroots society. On the eve of the June 2005 presidential elections, the progressive-reformist candidate, Mostafa Moin, invited the coalition of the *Melli-Mazhabi* (the nationalist-religious forces), a coalition of independent democratic reformists working outside the political establishment, to form a joint Front for Democracy and Human Rights. By extending their hand to the independent reformists such as Ezzatollah Sahabi and Ebrahim Yazdi of Iran's Liberation Movement, the reformist candidate was hoping to appeal to as many in the middle class as possible. It was not that the *Melli-Mazhabi* coalition, including Iran's Liberation Movement, was very popular, but that it remained the only opposition party in the country working outside the political system. It turned out that Moin's political discourse did not mean much to the lower classes of the urban poor or the rural class. Hence his political slogans such as "All political prisoners must be freed," with repeated words of "democracy" and "human rights," remained marginal. The reformists failed to transform these subjective and abstract words into an objective and tangible reality in the people's daily life. The 2005 presidential elections proved that democratic ideals alone are powerless unless expressed in a language accessible to all forces of civil society and addressing immediate concerns of the public. To reach this goal democratic forces need strong and grassroots organization to appeal to the people and mobilize their support.

Third, the politicization of social demands could have mobilized the lower classes and the lower-middle class for the reform movement. The reformist government, however, failed to encourage and help various social classes to transform their social demands into political platforms. The coalition of in-system reformists were united in the need for change, and yet remained divided on the nature and the scale of change. For

some of the in-system reformists, an extensive public mobilization of the people and grassroots socio-political institutions could have undermined the foundation of the Republic. For this reason, some of the in-system reformists preferred to seek a limited constituency rather than a public mobilization with an unintended consequence of the collapse of the whole regime.

The hardliner conservatives, by contrast, successfully used their institutional strength to dismantle the reform agenda and discourage reform's social base. In 1992, the reformist daily newspaper *Salam* described the organizational capability of the traditional-conservatives as follows: they have "a preparatory cadre-making school called the *Al-Sadeq University*, a daily newspaper called *Resalat*, an armed militia group called *Jamiyat-e Mo'talefeh-ye Islami*, a propagatory body called *Jame'eh-ye Vo'az-e Tehran* [Tehran's Preachers' Society] and a provisional body called the *Jame'eh-ye Anjomanha-ye Islami-e Asnaf va Bazaar* [the Society Islamic Guilds of Tehran's Bazaar]."[855] And yet, there was much more to the organizational success of the hardliner-conservatives. Three factors, in particular, contributed to their success. First, throughout its entire life the hardliner conservative groups suffered from a crisis of legitimacy, never exceeded 25 percent of the votes, and was elected only when the other forces boycotted or were excluded from elections. In the 2005 ninth presidential elections, Iran's hardliners, to use Mohammad-Reza Khatami's metaphor, were blessed and backed by the "*hezb-e padegani*, a "barrack-based party"[856] and used millions of *Basiji* militia as "'electoral foot soldiers.'"[857]

---

[855] *Salam*, 5 April, 1992, quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics*, p. 125

[856]Mohammad-Reza Khatami, Khatami's younger brother and the leader of Iran's Islamic Participation Front. The military's "multi-layered planning" implied that Iran's hardliners planned for a secret "coup-like plan" and kept it carefully "blacked-out" until 24 hours before the second round of elections, when the 1.5

Second, Iran's clerical rentier state provided the hardliners with both petrodollars and funding from the revolutionary foundations (*bonyads*) controlled by the office of the *vali-ye faqih*. According to three leading presidential candidates – Moin, Karrubi, and Rafsanjani – the campaign of the hardliner candidate, Ahmadinejad, was well funded.[858]

Third, Ahmadinejad adopted a populist platform directed at the urban and rural poor. His focus on "bread-and-butter issues" made "the theme of the contests 'change versus the status quo' rather than 'reformers versus conservatives.'"[859] Ahmadinejad, a loyal but invisible man of the clerical establishment, complained about past performance and raised the flag of social justice, representing himself as a man of the people. Ironically, the main beneficiaries of the corrupt-crony-clerical-capitalism – the coalition of the *mullah*-merchants-military – partly succeeded in mobilization the poor who had suffered most from the socio-economic status quo. They succeeded disguising Ahmadinejad's close ties to the establishment. For weeks he managed to move with his "headlights off" and "flew under the radar of public attention."[860] Hence, the active but

---

million *Basijis* were ordered and encouraged to cast their votes for Ahmadinejad. Moreover, each *Basiji* had to bring ten persons to cast their vote for Ahmadinejad. For this reason, Ahmadinejad suddenly emerged as the main challenger to the leading candidates.

[857] Abbas Milani, "A Historical Perspective," p. 32. Also, addressing a large meeting of the *Basiji* militia, the Chief of the Revolutionary Guards Corps, Mohammad-baqer Zolqadr, explicitly argued that, "in the complex political situation when foreign powers and extremist currents inside have for some time been determined, and planned, to change the result of the elections in their favor and to prevent the emergence of an efficient and principled government, we had to act in a *complex way* and the principled forces, thanks be to Allah, through correct and *multi-layered planning*, were able to get the support of the majority of the people in a tight and real competition." See *Sharq*, (Tehran: 14 July 2005), quoted in Ardeshir Mehrdad and Mehdi Kia, "Iran's Crisis: New-conservatives, regime crisis and political perspectives in Iran."

[858] The hardliner conservatives, for example, distributed five million CD's among the urban and rural, which showed Ahmadinejad's simple life and his charm and charity to the poor, and the luxury life of Rafsanjani and his family. Also, the reformist candidate, Mehdi Karrubi accused Khamenei's son, the Guardian Council, and the security forces of having interfered in the election to eliminate him from running for the runoff, giving his second-place to Ahmedinejad.

[859] Michael McFaul, "Chinese Dreams, Persian Realities," *Journal of Democracy*, 16 no. 4 (2005): 74-82, p. 80

[860] Abbas Milani, "A Historical Perspective," p. 32

unorganized civil society lost ground to the tiny but highly organized conservative-hardliners.

### 3.2.7. "Active and structured": How much agency?

As discussed in the first chapter, the model of "three power structures" introduced by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens points to the interaction between state, class, and transnational power structures in shaping societal and political outcomes.[861] We examined how the interaction between the institutional arrangements of the Islamic Republic, the position of social and new political classes in the post-Khomeini period, and transnational politics contributed to the fall of the reformist government. The political question is how much agency did Khatami have in relation to this outcome?

"A democratic regime," Samuel Huntington argues, "is installed not by trends but by people. Democracies are created not by causes but by causers;"[862] these causers are political leaders and social groups who intentionally or unintentionally promote democratization. For Juan Linz, however, the role of the leadership comes only next to structural factors. "Leadership," Juan Linz argues, is "a residual variable that ultimately cannot be ignored; but it should not be introduced before the explanatory power of other [i.e., structural] variables has been exhausted."[863] Whether a primary or a secondary factor, Adam Przeworski observes that political liberalization is unstable if the regime's softliners are weak; under such fragile conditions democratic reforms might provoke a

---

[861] D. Rueschemeyer, E. H. Stephens, and J. D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), pp. 60-70.

[862] Samuel P. Huntington, *Third wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century*, p. 108

[863] Juan J. Linz, "Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibrium," in Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 100

backlash from the counter-reform hardliners.[864] Given their weakness, the reformists' potential source of power was civil society.

But the reformists were unable and unwilling to use civil society forces because they were uncertain about popular intentions and concerned about mobilizing civil society forces. A powerful and mobilized civil society, the reformists believed, would not strengthen the reformists' regime; it instead would lead to its collapse. The rationale was twofold: first, the hardliners would not tolerate a process of democratization from below, and would harshly suppress the societal demands for a meaningful democratization. Second the reformists believed that democratization from below could cost the very existence of the Islamic Republic, because the societal demands would exceed the reformists' limited capability. They were fearful of radical changes and a backlash from the hardliners. Khatami was a child of the Islamic Republic and was very concerned about the survival of the Republic; he did not want to be a Mikhail Gorbachev for the Islamic Republic.

Moreover, the reformist intellectual discourse lived in the same universe of *Khomeinism* in which civil society and the power of people hold limited agency. It was in this sense that the reformist organizational strategy remained elitist, and lacked the strong grassroots and inclusive organizations required for a successful public mobilization. The reformists failed to communicate with different social constituencies and undermined the significant role of the lower classes. They never encouraged or helped social classes to transform their social demands into political platforms and left them immobilized. Hence, the potentially dynamic civil society remained unorganized and immobilized. The

---

[864] Adam Przeworski, "The Games of Transition," in S. Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 105-53.

reformist regime began with the motto "Iran for all Iranians," yet became defensive and adopted a passive strategy of "active calm," facilitating the collapse of reform and the ascendancy of Iran's conservative-hardliners.

The lesson from most of the successful democratic transitions is that the "people" are the key agent of change and, as Valerie Bunce suggests, a "top-down process" or democratization from below plays a key role in the transition to democracy. Mass mobilization offers the softliners a powerful resource and a soft power to negotiate with the hardliners who often control the lion's share of hard power. On this view, a rational choice perspective should not necessarily underestimate mass-based political protests. It can instead merge an actor-centric explanation with mass protests.[865] From this perspective, democratization should, to use Przeworski's argument, "combine elements from above and from below."[866]

Because structures limit and enable human agency, agencies can choose how to use and improve structural resources. The fall of the reformist government was not inevitable; the agency of the reform and the counter-reform played a significant part in its fall. The reform movement suffered most from the leadership style and the strategic decisions made and unmade by the reformists. A strong and seasoned leadership could have transformed structural obstacles into opportunities. As history suggests, without strong and organized social institutions civil society forces do not necessarily help democratic transition.[867] It is in this context that one could argue that the reform

---

[865] Valerie Bunce, "Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience," *World Politics* 55 (2003): 172-197, p. 172.

[866] Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 56.

[867] For a successful discussion on the impact of organized civil society on political process, see Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49.3 (1997) 401-429.

movement suffered from the leadership style and strategic decisions made and/or unmade by the in-system reformists.

## 4. Conclusion

Khatami's moment was another critical juncture in the long and painful path to democracy in Iran. This momentum was lost. Like all softliners, Khatami's reformist government initiated a process of "liberalization without democratization." His government, however, was unable and unwilling to use the invaluable power of civil society in a democratic transition. Liberalizers always look at civil society instrumentally, but more so in the Iranian case because the reformists were particularly bound by the institutional and intellectual legacies of *Khomeinism*. The Khomeinist state was an "early post-totalitarian state" and lacked sufficient diversity and autonomy within the ruling elites. It also prevented the rise of a strong and independent democratic opposition. Hence, the weakness of the state's softliners and the democratic opposition prevented a democratic transition.

The reformists failed to transform the uneven socio-political structure and were unable to challenge the ascendancy of the state-sponsored new political class privileged by the Khomeinist clerical rentier state. The reformists failed to keep a balance between various aspects of development: economic development, political development and social justice. They sacrificed social justice for the sake of economic development, and then economic development for the sake of political development. In the end it turned out that the reformists had sacrificed the very social forces essential for political development. The modern middle class was tired of the slow pace of political development, and

remained relatively vulnerable to dominant economic relations. Social injustice and the gap between the poor and the rich dissatisfied a significant segment of the public.

The interaction between international politics and the institutional legacy of *Khomeinism* was counterproductive. Khatami's discourse of "dialogue among civilizations" was lost in the midst of President Bush's project of regime change. For the hardliners, Khatami's discourse no longer provided a safety valve for protecting the entire regime from international pressures. The strategy of regime change and its practice in Iran's eastern and western neighbouring countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the escalation of tensions over Iran's nuclear program weakened the position of the reformists within the overall ruling structures, destroyed their internal cohesion, and consolidated the power of hardliners.

Equally important was the intellectual shadow of *Khomeinism*. The reformist regime stood on three intellectual pillars: Islamic constitutionalism, promoting civil society, and Islamic Democracy. All three intellectual pillars were bound to the lasting legacy of *Khomeinism*, which created a limited and inchoate subjectivity never independent of the *vali-ye faqih*.

The fall of the reformist regime was the failure of "*Khomeinism* with a human face." It remains to be seen whether the failure of the "in-system reformists" indicates the failure of the strategy of "in-system reform." The political question remains whether "in-system reform" can transform the Islamic Republic from its current stage of "early-post-totalitarianism" into "mature-post-totalitarianism" or "authoritarian," making democratic transition more feasible.

# CONCLUSION

## The Lessons and Legacies

The global wave of democracy suggests that democratization is not *sui generis*. It also suggests that there is no single meta-theory for a transition to democracy: each individual case is likely to take a distinct mode of transition to democracy because it enjoys particular socio-political features. Iran's distinctive historical and socio-political legacy has shaped its path in its transition to a democratic society. This legacy both helps and hinders democratic transition. This is where human agency can make a difference, by making strategic choices conducive to democratization.

Iran's three waves of democratization brought in two revolutions and two reforms, all of which failed to establish democracy. We discussed the extent to which the socio-political constraints and human agency contributed to this failure. We also argued that Iran in the third wave (1977-present) is more prepared for a transition to democracy. In historical terms Iran enjoys a long and rich history of reform and revolution in pursuit of the rule of law and democracy. The idea of democracy in Iran is neither a sudden development nor a western import; it is instead rooted in modern Iranian history. Iran is privileged by a number of structural opportunities, which were absent in the two previous waves. In political terms Iran shares the value of political independence and national unity, which was lacking in the first wave. Unlike the first and the second waves, Iran is no longer ruled by the absolute and arbitrary personal rule of sultanistic regimes. In social terms Iran is freed from the ill-effects of tribalism (in the first wave) and landlordism (in the first and second waves). Moreover, Iran in the third wave has a high rate of literacy rate (83 percent), "a per-capita national income above US$7,000 per year," and a high

level of urbanization and communication.[868] In terms of international politics Iran remains in a relatively better position to achieve democracy. Unlike the first wave, Iran is no longer a semi-colony; in contrast to the second wave, a national democratic polity is not an immediate threat to the interest of super powers.

Iran in the third wave still faces a number of challenges in the long and painful transition to democracy. Paradoxically, much more than during the two previous waves, clericalism remains a significant structural obstacle to achieving democracy in the third wave. The sultanistic structure of the Pahlavi state, then bipolar nature of international politics, the uneven development under the Shah's regime, the populist-revolutionary Islamic discourse, the strength of the traditional institutions, and Ayatollah Khomeini's charismatic leadership contributed to the rise and success of a modern clerical politics in the third wave. Ayatollah Khomeini put his stamp on the popular Revolution of 1979 and established a modern clerical Republic ruled by the *vali-ye faqih*. This polity, which was invented and introduced by the politics, personality and perspective of Ayatollah Khomeini, is identified as *Khomeinism. Khomeinism* is a modern invention of a politicized clerical discourse institutionalized in the Islamic Republic. The shadow of *Khomeinism* has remained the major obstacle to achieving democracy. This shadow reflects more the institutional and intellectual legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini than Islam as a culture or religion. Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of the *velayat-e faqih* is a radical departure from the traditional Islamic discourse, and represents one among many interpretations of Islam in Iran. In all three waves of democracy in Iran, Islam has remained far from a monolithic idea and played a complex and controversial role. The social base and political culture of Muslims has influenced their political position,

---

[868] Michael McFaul, "Chinese Dreams, Persian Realities," pp.75-76

sometimes leading them to attack, sometimes to appreciate democratic values. The finding of this study nullifies the theory of Muslim Exceptionalism, which suggests that Muslims are essentially immune to democracy, and that the Islamic culture remains the main barrier to a democratic transition. Like socialism and nationalism, Islam has been as diverse as the social forces in Iran, and played a controversial role in the democratic transition of Iran.

A few years before the 1979 Revolution, Ali Shariati asked "do you know what the source of misery is for Islam?" He answered that it is the coalition of the *mullahs* and the bazaari-merchant class. "Should this relationship continue," Shariati argued," Islam has been lost forever."[869] By the same token, one could argue that the source of misery for post-revolutionary Iran is the political, economic, and ideological domination of the *mullah*-merchant-military under *Khomeinism*. This coalition, which is blessed by a clerical politicized Islam and backed by an oil-centered rentier economy, remains the most significant factor determining the nature of the state, and how to meet obstacles in the path of democratization.

Under *Khomeinism* the rule of law is not universal since the office of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of jurist) stands outside the constitution. The struggle within the Islamic Republic in Khatami's reformist government represented the efforts of the reformists to bind the office of *velayat-e faqih* to the constitution. Ironically, it became evident that the reformists are bound to the institutional and intellectual legacy of *Khomeinism,* and therefore unable and unwilling to escape from Ayatollah Khomeini's shadow. They strived for a more democratic version of *Khomeinism*; yet the fall of the reformist regime indicated the failure of "*Khomeinism* with a human face." The Iranian

---

[869] Ali Shariati *Collected Works*, vol. 10, p. 37.

experience concurs with the findings of general studies of democratization, which suggest that a transition to democracy is most likely to fail when the hardliners (both in regime and opposition) are strong and the moderates (both in regime and opposition) are weak. Under such conditions, a return to civil society and empowering and organizing civil society forces is most likely a feasible solution for a successful democratization.

Democratization will not be achieved against the will of the *demos*; it will be accomplished with them, or not at all. For this reason the social elements of democracy – societal empowerment and social justice – remain an essential part of democracy. A deliberative model of democratic will formation can empower civil society, guarantee an equal and inclusive participation, and generate a democratic ethics of citizenship. Democratic ideas are ineffective if they are not reached by the common people. As Max Weber reminds us, ideas are powerless unless fused with material forces.[870] Ideas "cannot be separated from their social settings; that is, they cannot be separated from the institutions and social groups that keep systems of ideas in the socialization process."[871] Democracy can last longer if a strong and organized civil society appreciates democratic values. Equally important is the value of social justice. As in many countries coming late to industrialization, economic privatization without social justice brings about economic inequality in Iran, and resulting support for a populist agenda at the polls. Social justice brings the abstract value of democracy into the daily life of the people, and contributes to the consolidation of democracy.

There is a correlation between the nature of the state and the path of development. The Iranian lessons suggest that under the autocratic rentier state, a

---

[870] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*, pp. 61-3.

[871] Brian M. Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 8.

"Chinese model of development," economic development in the absence of political development, is unsustainable. Sustainable economic development requires political development to establish a transparent and accountable political system. In post-revolutionary Iran the resolution of economic, cultural, and other social contradictions largely depends on political democratization, because "the main contradiction" remains between "authoritarianism and democracy."[872]

## Future prospects

Iranians, Abdolkarim Soroush writes, "are the inheritors and the carries of three cultures at once." These triple cultural heritages "are of national, religious, and Western origins. While steeped in an ancient national culture, we are also immersed in our religious culture, and we are at the same time awash in successive waves coming from the Western shores. Whatever solutions that we decide for our problems must come from this mixed heritage."[873] In political terms three major forces in Iranian politics – nationalists, Islamists, and socialists – represent such a mixed and complex cultural heritage. Despite their different origins, none of these trends holds a pure identity. There are elements of Islamic culture and Western ideas (socialism and liberalism) among the Iranian nationalists; Islamists have adopted elements of nationalism and Western ideas, and socialists have been exposed to nationalism and Islamic culture. With such a complex and cross-cutting identity, each trend needs to learn from the other.

Islamists or citizens of the faith should learn from their fellow secular citizens that the institutional separation of religion and politics is a necessary condition for a

---

[872] Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "A new era for Iran's democracy"

[873] Soroush, "The Three Cultures," in M. Sadri and M. Sadri, trans. and eds., *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 156.

modern democracy. The secularists, liberal nationalists and socialists, need to learn that the intellectual and mental separation of religion and politics is neither possible nor desirable. Instead, they should know that in a "post-metaphysical" or "post-secular" era, as Jurgen Habermas reminds us, secularists "must open their minds to the possible truth content" of religious discourses and enter into "dialogues" with their fellow religious citizens.[874] According to Habermas, "post-metaphysical thought draws, with no polemical intention, a strict line between faith and knowledge. But it rejects a narrow scientific conception of reason and the exclusion of religious doctrines from the genealogy of reason;"[875] in other words, it "is prepared to learn from religion while remaining strictly agnostic."[876] Secular citizens should distance themselves from the post-Enlightenment cliché which suggests that religious traditions are "archaic relics of pre-modern societies that continue to exist in the present."[877] The "ethics of citizenship," Habermas argues, requires that both religious and secular citizens stop behaving in an uncivil and "paternalistic," way, and step into a "*complementary* learning process."[878]

Both secularists and religious citizens must avoid cultural essentialism. Secular citizens need to understand that their fellow religious citizens can appreciate freedom, democracy, and social justice and even extract these ideals from their religious soils. Religious citizens should know that extracting ideals such as democracy and social justice from religious texts does not make them religious concepts; they are neither religious nor anti-religious notions. Likewise, secularists should stop essentializing such concepts by suggesting that religious traditions and modern democracy are mutually

---

[874] Habermas, "Religion in the public sphere," p. 8
[875] Ibid, p. 12
[876] Ibid, p. 13
[877] Ibid, p. 11
[878] Ibid

exclusive. Instead, they need to support a progressive, democratic Islam. Under the Khomeinist rule, the vitality of religious reform is not so much a religious obligation but a civic responsibility. Religious reform, Ali Shariati argued, "makes the weapon of religion inaccessible to those who have undeservedly armed themselves with it...eliminates the spirit of imitation...extracts and refines the enormous resources of the society and converts the jamming agents into energy...and bridges the ever-widening gap between the 'island of the intelligentsia' and the 'shore of the masses.'"[879] Religious reform can contribute to socio-political reform; democratization of religious discourse can serve political democratization. A progressive and democratic Islam, a civil public religion, is a powerful challenge from within. It can provide a viable alterative to the clerical political Islam of *Khomeinism*. Religious and secular citizens need to challenge the dominant political version of clericalism either on behalf of Divine duty, or civil responsibility. "Anti-clericalism," as Richard Rorty observes, "is a political view, not an epistemological or metaphysical one. It is the view that *ecclesiastical institutions*, despite all the good they do – despite all the comfort they provide to those in need or in despair – *are dangerous to the health of democratic societies.*[880]

In the final analysis, democratization and democracy are about people and how they come together in shaping their destiny. This study has shown that human agency remains the critical instrument in rearranging social structures to meet human needs in the socio-political realms. The modern history of Iran might be viewed as a complex narrative of a people struggling to find a political arrangement sufficiently consistent with

---

[879]Ali Shariati, *Collected Works, Vol. 20.*

[880] Richard Rorty, "Anticlericalism and Atheism," in Santiago Zabala ed., *The Future of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) p. 33. Italics are added.

their cultural inheritance to provide for them political dignity with freedom, economic prosperity with social equality, and a comprehensive development consistent with Iran's cultural resources. As mentioned earlier, Ali Shariati once argued that Iranians would be better off if they appreciate freedom and democracy without vulgar capitalism, social justice and socialism without authoritarianism, and religion/spirituality without clericalism. He introduced a trilogy that simultaneously underlined three human values of liberty (*azadi*), social equality (*barabari*), and spirituality (*erfan*). In this model, one has to fight political dictatorship (*esetbdad*), material injustice (*estesmar*) and religious alienation (*estehmar*). One could argue that any sustainable solution and inclusive plan for the future success and stability of Iranian democracy will most likely include this trilogy of human values.

Political conjunctures have come and may come again and be effective if still conditions are solid, and if human agents take appropriate and sustained actions. A new generation of Iranians may find the means to bring together Iran's past and future within a democratic arrangement that will preserve something of Iran's complex cultural heritage. It has been said that, the "Islamic revolution, like the French and Russian revolutions before it, has been busy devouring its own children. One day, its grandchildren will devour the revolution."[881] The hope, and what I have argued for, is that they will do better than their ancestors in building a more open and representative society, thus fulfilling modern Iran's quest for democracy.

---

[881] Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam," *New York Tim*, October 2005.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Books and Journal Articles (Persian)

Adamiyat, Fereydon. *Andisheye Azadi dar Jonbeshe Mashrouteh [The Idea of Freedom in the Constitutional Movement]*. Tehran: Sokhan, 1340/1961.

Armin, Mohsen and Hojjat Razzaghi, eds. *Bimha va Omidha*. Tehran: Hamshahri Publications, 1999.

Bazargan, Abdol-Ali ed. *Masael va moshkelat-e nakhostin sal-e enghelab az zaban-e ra'is-e dowlat-e movaqqat* (The Problems of the revolution's First Year, as Told by the Head of the Provisional Government). Tehran: Nehzat-e Azadi, 1983.

Buzurgmehr, Jalil ed. *Mosaddeq dar Mahkameye Nezami*, Vols.1 &2. Tehran: 1985.

Dowlatabadi, Yahya. *Hayete Yahya [The Life of Yahya]*. Tehran: Ferdowsi Publisher, 1361/1982.

*Fa'aliyathaye Komitteh Emdad-e Imam Khomeini* (Imam Khomeini's Relief Committee Activities) in *Iran Statistical Yearbook* (Tehran: 1376/1997), pp. 112-119.

Fateh, M. *Panjah Sal Naft Dar Iran* (*Fifty Years of Iranian Oil*). Tehran: Sherkat-I Sahami-I, 1956.

Ganji, Akbar. *Tarik-Khane-ye Ashbah* (*The Cellar of Phantoms*). Tehran: Tarh-e No, 1378/1999.

Jazani, Bizhan. "Marksism-e Islami ya Islam-e Marksisti" ["Marxist Islam or Islamic Marxism"]. Jahan 34-35. September-October 1985.

Kadivar, Mohsen. *Andisheh-ye Siyasi dar Islam [Political Thought in Islam]*, 2vols. Tehran: Nay Publications, 1998.

Kasravi, Ahmad. "Concerning Reza Shah Pahlavi." *Parcham*, 23-25 June 1942.

Khomeini, Rohollah. *Kashf al-Asrar*. Tehran: Nashr-e Safar,1941.

Khomeini, Ayatollah. *Sahifeye Nour*, 16 vols. vol. 5. Tehran: 1361/1982.

*Khomeini va Jonbesh: Majmueh-ye Nameha va Sokhanraniha* (A Collection of Khomeini's Letters and Speeches). Tehran: 1352/1974.

Khomeini, Rohollah. *Velayate Faqih: Hokomate Islami* (The Rule of the Jurisprudence: Islamic Government). Tehran: Sepehr, 1357/1978.

*Khotut-e Kolli-ye Andishe-haye Imam Khomeini.* Tehran: Centre for Strategic Studies, 1994.

Malekzadeh, Mehdi. *Tarikhe Enghelabe Mashroute Iran [History of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran]*. Tehran: Elmi Publisher, 1363/1984.

*Modafeate Mosaddeq va Rollin dar Divane Binolmelaliye Lahe.* Tehran: 1357/1978.

Mojtahed-Shabestari, Mohammad. *"Rah-e Doshvar-e Mardom-Salari."* (The Difficult Path to Democracy). *Aftab.* Tehran: Bahman 1381/Januray 2001.

Nili, et al. *"Barrasi-e Tahavolaat-e Faghr,Ttozi'e Daramad, va Refaah-e Ejtemaa'ei" Sazeman-e Modiriyat va Barnaameh Rizi-e Keshvar.* Tehran: 1379/1997.

Nuri, Abdollah. *Shokaran-e Eslah* (Hemlock of Reform). Tehran: Tarh-e No, 1378/1999.

Sahabi, Ezzatollah *"Iqtesad-e Bazari Ba'd az Jang"* (The Bazaari Economy after the War). *Iran-e Farda.* Tehran: Spring 1993.

Shariati, Ali. *Majmou'e Asar (Collected Works)*, vol. 10. Tehran: Ferdowsi, 1360/1981.

Soroush, Abdulkarim. *Mana va Mabnaye Secularism* (The Meaning and the Basis of Secularism). *Kiyan* 26, (August-September 1995), pp. 4-13.

Soroush, Abdolkarim. "Soroush on Freedom of Clergy." *Kiyan* (April-May 1995), translated in FBIS-NES-95-241-S, 15 December 1995.

**Periodicals, Reports, Newspapers and other Media (Persian)**

*Adineh* 106. Tehran: December 1995.

*Asr-e Azadegan.* (Tehran: April 23, 2000; February 15, 2000; November 19, 1997; July 24, 1996; October 2, 1996).

Azari-Qomi, Ayatollah. *Ettela'at,* June 23, 1979.

Azimi, Hossein. *Iran-e Emrooz* 1378/1999.

*Bahman.* (Tehran: February 3, 1996; February 6, 1996).

Baqi, E. Interview with S. Hajarian, *Fath.* Tehran: 3 April 2000.

*Bayan.* June-July, 1990

Central Bank of Iran, Annual Reports 1351 (1977), 1357 (1978), 1364 (1967), 1351 (1972), 1356 (1977), 1971, 1978

*Entekhab* Daily. (January 5, 2002; October 6, 1990; February 7 1991; February 26, 1991; November 2, 1991).

*Hamshahri*. Tehran: (July 6, 1995; February 19, 1996; February 22 1996; Februrary27, 1996; March 15, 1999).

Hojjat, Ayatollah. *Ettela'at*. Tehran: June 22-23 1979.

"Illiteracy rate dropped by 20 percent since 1979" *Islamic Republic News Agency*, 14 September 1993.
www.netiran.com/htdocs/dailynews/archives/IRNA/1993/93091414RGGO7.html

"Inauguration Speech by President Khatami, 4 August 1997."
<www.persia.org/Khatami/speech>

Iran, Budget and Plan Organization (*Salnameh-ye Amari-ye Keshvar*).Tehran: 1992.

*Iran* Daily. Tehran: January 22, 1996.

*Iran-e Farda*, no 16 (February 1995): 64-66.

"Iran: Majles Sessions." (*Resalat*, 16 May 1992, FBIS-NES-92-117-S, 17 June 1992; *Resalat*, 22 April 1992, FBIS-NES-92-098-S, 17 May 1992; *Resalat*, 27 April 1992, FBIS-NES-92-117-S, 17 June 1992; *Resalat*, 16 May 1992, FBIS-NES-92-117-S, 17 June 1992; *Resalat*, 27 November 1992, FBIS-NES-92-005-S, 9 January 1992).

Iran's Statistical Yearbook. Tehran (1382/ 2003-2004; 1376/1997; 1358/1980)

*Ja'meeh*. Tehran: April 30, 1998.

*Kaveh*, vol. 1, no. 1. January 22, 1920.

*Keyhan*. Tehran (June 10, 1989; August 1, 1989; November 26, 1989; November 26, 1990).

"Khamene'i Delivers Friday Prayer Sermons." Broadcast on Tehran Domestic-Service 1 January 1988, FBIS-NES-88-001, 4 January 1988.

"Khatami Addresses Majles Hezbollah Group." *Ettela'at*, 27 February 1997, FBIS-NES-97-053, 27 February 1997.

Khatami, Mohamd. *Az Donya-ye Shahr ta Shahr-e Donya*. Tehran: Nay Press, 1994.

Khatami, Mohammad. (BBC SWB ME/3099S/14-9, 11 Dec. 1997; ME/3210 MED/2, 9 Jan. 1998).

Khatami, Mohammad. *Bim-e Mowj*. Tehran: Nay Press, 1996.

"Khatami Interviewed on Elections." *Jomhuri-ye Islami*, 25 February 1997, FBIS-NES-97-047, 25 February 1997.

"Khatami Interviewed on Need to Address Youth Problems." *Hamshahri*, 6 March 1997, FBIS-NES-97-067, 8 March 1997.

Khatami, Mohammad. "President's Opening Address to the OIC General Session." <www. Persia.org/khatami/khatami03.html>

Khatami, Mohammad. Speech at the Islamic Conference Organization in December 1997. BBC SWB ME/3099S/14-9, 11 Dec. 1997.

"Khatami: The Clergy Are Not Masters of the People." 27 December 1997. Available from <http://persia.orr/khatami>

Khatami, Mohammad. "Transcript of CNN's Interview with President Khatami." <www.persia.org/khatami/khatami06.html>

"Khomeini Answers Khamene'i Letter on Authority." Broadcast 1 January 1988, FBIS-NES-88-004, 7 January 1988.

"Khomeini Defends Concept of Theocracy in 22 October Speech." Broadcast 22 October 1979, FBIS-MEA-79-206, vol. 5, no. 206.

"Khomeini Delivers Speech on freedom, Plots." Broadcast 25 May 1979, FBIS-MEA-79-103, 29 May 1979.

"Khomeini Message on *Hajj*, Resolution 598." Broadcast 20 July 1988, FBIS-NES-88-140,21 July 1988.

"Khomeini Ruling on State Powers Report." Broadcast 23 December 1978, FBIS-NES-87, 24 December 1987.

Ladjevardi, Habib. General Fereidun Jam in an interview recorded by Habib Ladjevardi. 14 November 1981 and 10 March 1983. London: IOHCHU.

Majles Deputies. "Open Letter to the Leader." May 24, 2003. Available from <www. Gooyanews.org>

*Mardom*. Tehran: Ordibehest 14, 1358/May 6, 1979.

"Montazeri on State's Road to Destruction." London *Keyhan*, 10 October 1994, EBIS-NES-94-231,10 October 1994.

"Montazeri's Speech." *Keyhan*, 4 December 1997.
<http://eurasianews.com/iran/montadres.html>
Mosaddeq's speech. Internal Situation. File no. 10101/368/51, dated 28 September 1951. FO 248 1514

Nabavi, Behzad. "Behzad Nabavi, Morteza Nabavi Attended Tehran University Roundtable." *Salam*, 8 February 1997, FBIS-NES-97 061, 8 February 1997.

*Payam-e Emrooz*. Tehran: Fall 1994.

President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami's Inaugural Speech to the Islamic Consultative Assembly. Tehran: n. n., 1997.

*Resalat*. Tehran (October 6, 1990; November 23, 1997; July 24, 1998).

Salam. Tehran (24 July 1995; November 8, 1995'; June 9, 1991; February 13, 1992; March 17, 1992; April 5, 1992; October 5, 1992; July 24, 1995; April 27, 1997; April, 8, 1997; December 9, 1997; December 11, 1997).

Sami'i, Bill. "Iran: Do the Presidential Vote Numbers Really Add Up?" *Radio Liberty*, 30 June 2005.

*Shalamcheh*. Tehran: September-October 1997.

*Sharq*. Tehran: 14 July 2005.

*Shoma*. Tehran: April 1997.

*Sobh*. Tehran (April 18, 1995; March 6, 1996).

"Statement by Seyyed Mohammad Khatami." President's Opening Address to the OIC General Session." Available from <www. Persia.org/khatami/khatami03.html>

*Tous* daily. 5 Mordad 1377/27 July 1998, p. 1

**Books and Journal Articles (English)**

Abrahamian, Ervand. "Empire Strikes Back: Iran in U.S. Sights." In *Inventing the Axis of Evil*, eds., edited by Bruce Cumings, Ervand Abrahamian, and Moshe Ma'oz. New York: The New Press, 2004.

Abrahamian, Ervand. *Iran Between Two Revolutions* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Abrahamian, Ervand. *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Abrahamian, Ervand. "Oriental Despotism: The Case of Qajar Iran." *Middle Eastern Studies,* 5 (1974):3-31.

Abrahamian, Ervand. *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin.* London: I. B. Tauris, 1989.

Abrahamian, Ervand. "The Crowed in Iranian Politics, 1905-53." In Haleh Afshar, ed. *Iran: A Revolution in Turmoil.* Hound mills: Macmillan, 1985.

Abrahamian, Ervand. "The Islamic Left: from Radicalism to Liberalism." In Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left.* London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004.

Abrahamian, Ervand. *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran.* Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1999.

Afary, Janet. *The Iranian constitutional revolution, 1906-1911: grassroots democracy, social democracy, & the origins of feminism.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Afary, Janet and Kevin B. Anderson. *Michel Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and Seductions of Islamism.* University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Akhavi, Shahroukh. *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980.

Alam, Asadollah. *The Shah and I,* edited by Alinaghi Alikhani. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1991.

Algar, Hamid. Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini. Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981.

Amirahmadi, Hooshang. "Bunyad." *Encyclopaedia of Modern Islamic World,* vol. 1

Amuzegar, Jamishid. *Iran's Economy under the Islamic Republic.* London: Taurus Press, 1994.

Anderson, Lisa. "Lawless Government and Illegal Opposition: Reflection on the Middle East." In Lisa Anderson, ed., *Transitions to Democracy.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Anderson, Roy R., Robert F. Seibert, and Jon G. Wagner, eds., *Politics and Change in the Middle East: Sources of Conflict and Accommodation.* Upper Saddle River, N J: Prentice Hall, 1998.

An-Na'im, Abdullahi. *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999.

Ansari, Ali A. *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000.

Ansari, Ali M. *Modern Iran since 1921: The Pahlavis and* After. London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003.

Arjomand, Said Amir "Authority in Shiism and Constitutional Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran." In *The Twelver Shia in the Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History*, eds., edited by Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende. Brill: Tuta Pallace, 2001.

Arjomand, Said Amir. "Democratization and the Constitutional Politics of Iran since 1997." *Polish Sociological Review* 136, no. 4 (2001):349-367.

Arjomand, Said Amir. *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Arjomand, Said Amir. *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Asad, Talal. "Europe against Islam: Islam in Europe." *The Muslim World* 87:2 (April 1997).

Ash, Timothy Garton. "Refolution." In *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the fate of Central Europe*, ed., edited by Timothy Garton Ash, 309-324.Vintage, 1990.

Ash, Timothy Garton. *The Magic Lantern: The Revolutions of 89: Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague*. New York: Random House, 1990.

Azimi, Fakhreddin. *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1989.

Azimi, Fakhreddin "The Reconciliation of Politics and Ethics, Nationalism and Democracy: an Overview of the Political Career of Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq." In *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil*, eds., edited by James A. Bill and WM. Roger Louis. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1988.

Bakhash, Shaul. "Iran's Remarkable Election." In *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, eds., edited by Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Baktiari, Bahman. *Parliamentary Politics in Post-revolutionary Iran*. Gainesville: Florida University Press, 1996.

Banuazizi, Ali. "Faltering Legitimacy: The Ruling Clerics and Civil Society in Iran." *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 8, no. 4(1995): 571-596.

Barber, Benjamin. *Strong Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Bashiriyeh, Hossein. *The State and Revolution in Iran, 1962-1982*. Croom Helm, 1983.

Bayat, Assef. *Workers and Revolution in Iran: a Third World Experience of Workers' Control*. London: Zed, 1987.

Bayat, Mangol. *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982.

Beetham, David. Democracy and Human Rights. Oxford: Polity Press, 1999.

Berman, Sheri. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49 no.3 (1997): 401-429.

Bharier, j. *Economic Development in Iran*, 1900-1972 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Bill, James. *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Brown, Edward G. *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV. London: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Brumberg, Daniel. *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. "Subduing Globalization: The Challenge of the Indigenization of Movement." In *Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion, and Modernity*, eds., edited by B. Schaebler and L. Stenburg. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004.

Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. "The Paradox of Politics in Postrevolutionary Iran." In *Iran at the Crossroads*, eds., edited by John L. Esposito and R.K. Ramazani. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Boroumand, Ladan and Roya Boroumand. "Is Iran Democratizing? Reform at the Impasse." In *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, eds. edited by L. Diamond, M. Plattner, and D. Brumberg. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Buchta, Wilfried. *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic*. Washington D.C.: The Washington Institute, 1999.

Bunce, Valerie. "Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience." *World Politics* 55 (2003): 172-197

Cardoso, Fernando H. "Associated-Dependent Development: Theoretical and Practical Implications." In Alfred Stepan, ed., *Authoritarian Brazil*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973, pp. 142-167.

Casanova, Jose. "Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam." *Social Research* Vol. 68, No. 4 (Winter 2001).

Chehabi, Houchang. "Religion and Politics in Iran: How Theocratic is the Islamic Republic?" *Journal of the American Arts and Sciences*, 120, no. 3 (1991): 69-91.

Chehabi, H. E. "The Political Regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Comparative Perspective." *Government and Opposition* 36. no.1 (2000): 48-70.

Chehabi, H E. "The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic republic in Iran." In *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions*, eds., edited by Yossi Shain and Juan J. Linz. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Chehabi, H. E. and Juan J. Linz. "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule." In *Sultanistic Regimes*, eds., edited by H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz. Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Chehabi, H. E. and Juan J. Linz. "A Theory of Sultanism 2: Genesis and Demise of Sultanistic Regimes." In *Sultanistic Regimes*, eds., edited by H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz. Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Chehabi, H.E. and Juan J. Linz, eds. *Sultanistic Regimes*. Baltimore, London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Cohen, J.L. and A. Arato. *Civil Society and Political Theory*.Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. "Democracy with Adjectives: A Pragmatic Approach to Choices about Concepts," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1: 537-565

Collier, Ruth Berins. Paths *Towards Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Collier, Ruth B. *Paths to Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Collins, R. *Macrohistory: Essays in Sociology of the Long Run*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier. *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labour Movements, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Cotton, Richard. "Nationalism in twentieth-century Iran and Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq." In *Musaddeq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil*, eds., edited by James A. Bill and WM. Roger Louis. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1988.

Dabashi, Hamid. *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.

Dahl, Robert. *A Preface to Democratic Theory*. Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 1963.

Dahl, Robert. *Democracy and its Critics*. London: Yale University Press, 1989.

Dahl, Robert. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

Diamond, Larry. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. London: John Hopkins University, 1999.

Diamond, Larry. "Rethinking Civil Society towards Democratic Consolidation." *Journal of Democracy* (1994).

Diamond, Larry and Gary Marks, eds. *Reexamining democracy: essays in honour of Seymour Martin Lipset*. Newbury Park, California: 1992.

Diamond, Larry and Marc F. Plattner, eds. *Nationalism, ethnic conflict, and democracy*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Diba, Farhad. *Mossadeqh: A Political Biography*. London: Croom Helm, 1986.

Downing, Brian M. *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Ehsani, Kaveh. "Municipal Matters: The Urbanization of Consciousness and Political Change in Tehran." Middle East Report, no. 212 (fall 1999): 22-27.

Emirbayer, Mustafa and Jeff Goodwin. "Network Analysis, Culture and the Problem of Agency." *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994):1411-54.

Enayat, Hamid. *Modern Islamic Political Thought.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982.

Euben, Roxanne L. "Mapping Modernities, 'Islamic' and 'Western'." In *Border Crossings: Towards a Comparative Political Theory*, ed. Edited by Fred Dallmayr. London: Lexington Books, 1999.

Farhi, Farideh. *State and Urban-Based Revolutions.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Farsoun, Samih, K. & Mehrdad Mashayekhi. "Iran's Political Culture." In *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, eds., edited by Samih K. Farsoun & Mehrdad Mashayekhi. London: Rutledge, 1992.

Fischer, Mary Ellen. "Introduction." In *Establishing Democracy*, edited by Mary Ellen Fischer. Boulder: Westview, 1996.

Foran, John, ed. *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Foran, John. "A Theory of Third World Social Revolutions: Iran, Nicaragua, and El Salvador Compared." *Critical Sociology* 19 (1992):3-27.

Foran, John. *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1993.

Foran, John. "The Iranian Revolution of 1977-79: A Challenge of Social Theory." In *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran*, ed., edited by John Foran. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Foran. John and Jeff Goodwin. "Revolutionary Outcomes in Iran and Nicaragua: Coalition Fragmentation, War, and the Limits of Social Transformation." *Theory and Society* 22 (1993): 209-47.

Franklin, Daniel P. and Michael J. Baun, eds. *Political Culture and Constitutionalism: A Comparative Approach.* Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1995.

Friedrich, C.J. and Z. K. Brzezinski. *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955.

Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man.* New York: Free Press, 1992.

Fukuyama, Francis. *Trust: Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity.* New York: Free Press, 1995.

Ganji, Akbar. "The Struggle against Sultanism." *Journal of Democracy,* 16 no .4 (2005): 38-51.

Gasiorowski, Mark J. "The Power Struggle in Iran." *Middle East Policy,* VII, no. 4 (October 2000).

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Geertz, Clifford. *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia.* New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1968.

Gellner, Ernest. *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals.* New York: Penguin, 1994, 15-29.

Gellner, Ernest. "Islam and Marxism: Some Comparisons." *International Affairs* 67 (January 1991)

Gellner, Ernest. *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion.* New York: Rutledge, 1992.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Giddens, Anthony, ed. *The Global Third Wave Debates.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001.

Gheissari, Ali and Vali Nasr. *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty.* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Goldstone, Jack A. *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World.* Berkeley: University of California Press,1991.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* eds. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

Grugel, Jean. *Democratization: A Critical Introduction.* New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Gunder Frank, Andre. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 196, pp. 2-15.

Habermas, Jurgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity – Twelve Lectures.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987.

Habermas, Jurgen. "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed. *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. pp. 21-30.

Halliday, Fred. *Iran, Dictatorship and Development.* Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979.

Halliday, Fred. *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation.* London: Tauris, 1996.

Halliday, Fred. "The Politics of Islamic Fundamentalism: Iran, Tunisia and the Challenge to the Secular State." In A.S. Ahmed and H. Donnan, eds., *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity.* London: Rutledge, 1994.

Havel, Vaclav. "The Emperor Has No Clothes." *Journal of Democracy,* 16 no. 4 (2005): 5-8.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Philosophy of Rights,* edited by T.M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Hiro, Dilip. *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict.* New York: Rutledge Chapman and Hall, 1991.

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Huntington, Samuel P. *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the Modern World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996)

Huntington, Samuel P. *Third wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century.* Norman, Okla: University f Oklahoma Press, 1991.

Jabberi, A. and R. Olson, *Iran: Essays on Revolution in the Making* (Lexington: Mazda, 1981)

Jorjani, David. "Revolution in the Semiperiphery: The Case of Iran." In *Revolution in the World System,* ed., edited by Terry Boswell. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.

Karl, T.L. "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America." In D.A. Rustow and P.K. Erickson, eds., *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives.* New York: HarperCollins, 1991, pp. 163-191.

Karl, Terry Lynn. "The Hybrid Regimes of Central America." *Journal of Democracy,* 6, no. 3 (1995): 72-86.

Karl, Terry Lynn and Phillip C. Schmitter. "Modes of Transitions in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe." *International Social Science Journal* 128 (May 1991).

Karshenas, M. and H. Hakimian, "Oil, Economic Diversification and the Democratic Process in Iran," *Iranian Studies*, 38 (1) March 2005, pp. 67-90.

Katouzian, Homa. *Iranian History and Politics: The Dialectic of state and society*. London; New York: Rutledge Curzon: 2003.

Katouzian, Homa. *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1990.

Katouzian, Homa. "The Pahlavi Regime in Iran." In *Sultanistic Regimes*, eds., edited by E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz. Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Katouzian, Homa. *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism, and Pseudo-modernism, 1929-1979*. New York: New York University Press, 1981.

Katouzian, Homa. "The Strange Politics of Khalil Maleki." In Stephanie Cronin, ed., Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left. London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004.

Katz, Mark. Revolutions and Revolutionary Waves. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Kazemi, Farhad. "Civil Society and Iranian Politics." In *Civil Society in the Middle East*, ed., edited by Augustus Richard Norton. Leiden: Brill, 1996.

Kazemi, Farhad. *Poverty and Revolution in Iran: The Migrants Poor, Urban marginality and Politics*. New York: New York View Press, 1980.

Kazemi, Farhad. "The Precarious Revolution: Unchanging Institutions and the Fate of Reform in Iran." *Journal of International Affairs*, 57, no.1 (Fall 2003): 81-95.

Keddie, Nikki R. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jama ad-Din al-Afghani*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Keddie, Nikki R. *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*. New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2003.

Khalilzad, Zalmay and Cheryl Benard. *The Government of God: Iran's Islamic Republic*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

Khomeini, R. "Islamic Government." In *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* ed., edited by Hamed Algar. Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981.

Kornhauser, William. *The Politics of Mass Society*. New York: Free Press, 1969.

Kurzman, Charles. *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics. London: Verso, 1985

Lefort, Claude. Democracy and Political Theory. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988.

Lerner, Daniel. *The Passing of Traditional Society*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958.

Lewis, Bernard. Interview. C-SPAN, December 30, 2001.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

Lewis, Bernard. "Time for Toppling." *Wall Street Journal*. September 28, 2002.

Lewis, Bernard. "The Roots of Muslim Rage." *Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990).

Linz, Juan J. "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain." In *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology*, eds. edited by Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan. New York: Free Press, 1970.

Linz, Juan J. "Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibrium." In *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration*, eds., edited by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Linz, Juan J. *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000.

Linz, Juan. "Types of Political Regimes and Respects for Human Rights: Historical and Cross-National Perspective." In *Human Rights in Perspective: A Global Assessment*, eds., edited by Asbjorn Eide and Bernt Hagtvet. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1999.

Linz, Juan J. and Alfred Stepan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Linz, Juan and Alfred Stepan. *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Lipset, S. M. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review*, 53, no. 1 (1959).

Luciani, Beblawi Hazen and Giacomo Luciani, eds. *The Rentier State*. London: Croom Helm, 1987.

Lukes, Steven. "Power and Structure." *Essays in Social Theory*. London: 1977.
Lummis, C. Douglas. *Radical Democracy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996

Mahdavy, Hossein. "The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in rentier States: The Case of Iran." In *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, ed., edited by M.A. Cook. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Mahoney, James. "Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research: The Case of Democracy and Authoritarianism." In *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds., edited by James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Mahoney James and Richard Snyder. "Rethinking Agency and Structure in the Study of Regime Change." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 34 (1999): 3-32.

Mainwaring, Scott. "Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical and Comparative Issues." In Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and Samuel Valenzuela eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*. Notre Dam: Notre Dam University Press, 1992, 294-341.

Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia*. London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1960.

Markoff, John. *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change*. Thousand Oak; California: Pine Forge Press, 1996.

Marx, Karl "The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed., edited by R.C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978.

Matin-Asgari, Afshin. "From Social Democracy to Social Democracy: The twentieth-century odyssey of the Iranian Left." In Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left*. London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004.

McAdam, Doug. Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

McFaul, Michael. "Chinese Dreams, Persian Realities." *Journal of Democracy*, 16 no. 4 (2005): 74-82.

McPherson, C. B. *Democratic Theory: essays in Retrieval*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973

McGhee, George. *Envoy to the Middle World: Adventures in Diplomacy*. New York: 1983.

Milani, Abbas. "A Historical Perspective." *Journal of Democracy* 16, no.4 (2005): 23-34.

Milani, Mohsen M. "Reform and Resistance in the Islamic Republic of Iran." In *Iran at the Crossroads*, eds., edited by John L. Esposito and R.K. Ramazani. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Milani, Mohsen M. *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: from Monarchy to Islamic Republic*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

Mirsepassi, Ali. "The tragedy of the Iranian Left." In Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left*. London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004.

Mirsepassi, Ali. *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 2000.

Moaddel, Mnasoor. *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Mofid, Kerman. *The Economic Consequences of the Gulf* War. New York: 1990.

Moghadam, Valentine. "Islamic Populism, Class, and Gender in Post-revolutionary Iran." In *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran*, ed. Edited by John Foran. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Moghadam, Valentine. "Populist Revolution and the Islamic state in Iran." In *Revolution in the World System*, ed., edited by Terry Boswell. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.

Moghissi, Haideh. *Populism and Feminism in Iran: Women's Struggle in a Male-defined Revolutionary Movement*. London: Macmillan, 1994.

Moghissi, Haideh and Saeed Rahnema. "The Working Class and the Islamic State in Iran." In Stephanie, Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left*. London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004.

Moin, Bager. *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah, London*. New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999.

Monshipori, Mahmood. "The Politics of Culture and Human Rights in Iran: Globalizing and Localizing Dynamics," in Mahmood Monshipouri, et al. eds., *Constructing Human Rights in the Age of globalization*. Armonk: M.E. Sharp, 2003

Moore Jr., Barrington. *Social origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. London: Penguin Press, 1966.

Mouffe, Chantal. The Return of the Political. London: Verso, 1993.

Moslem, Mehdi. *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002.

Mottahedeh, Roy. *The Mantle of the Prophet: Learning and power in modern Iran.* London; Chatto & Windus, 1986.

Nasr, Vali. "The Conservative Wave Rolls On." Journal *of Democracy* 16 no.4 (2005):9-22.

Norris, Pippa and Ronald Inglehart. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

O'Donnell,Guillermo A. *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism Studies in South American Politics*. Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1979.

O'Donnell Guillermo, Phillip Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspective.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986.

O'Donnell, Guillermo and Philippe Schmitter. "Defining Some Concepts." In *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, eds., edited by Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Palma, G. Di. *To Crafts democracies: AN Essay on Democratic Transitions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Parsa, Misagh. *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of Iran, Nicaragua and the Philippines.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Parsa, Misagh. *The Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

Parsons, Anthony. *The Pride and the Fall: Iran, 1974-79*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1984.

Pesaran, Hashem. "The Iranian Foreign Exchange Policy and the Black Market for Dollars." *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24 (2001): 101-25.

Przeworski, Adam. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Przeworski, Adam. "Some Problems in the Study of Transition to Democracy." In *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, eds., edited by G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter, L. Whitehead. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Przeworski, Adam. "The Games of Transition." In *Issues in Democratic Consolidation*, eds., edited by Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and Samuel Valenzuela. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992.

Przeworski, Adam, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Development and Democracy: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Rahnema, Ali. *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998.

Rahnema, Saeed. "The Left and the Struggle for Democracy in Iran." In Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left*. London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004.

Rahnema, Saeed. "Work Councils I Iran: The Illusion of Worker Control." *Economic and Industrial Democracy* (SAGE, London, Newbury Park and New Delhi), Vol. 13 (1992), 69-94.

Rahnema, Saeed and Haideh Moghissi. "Clerical Oligarchy and the question of Democracy in Iran." *Monthly Review*, Vol. 52, No. 10, March 2001.

Rejali, Darius M. *Torture and Modernity: Self, Society, and State in Modern Iran*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

Rose. Richard and Doh Chull Shin. "Democratization Backwards: The Problem of Third-Wave Democracies." *British Journal of Political Science* 31, part 2, April (2001):331-345.

Rouleau, Eric. "La Republique Islamique d'iran Confrontee a la Societe Civile." *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1995. Available from <http/www.mondediplomatique.fr/1995/06/rouleau/1542.html>

Rouleau, Eric. "En Iran, Islam Contre Islam." *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1999. Availabr from <www. Monde-diplomatique.fr/1999/06rouleau/12105.html>

Rueschemeyer, D., E. H. Stephens, and J. D. Stephens. *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992.

Rueschemeyer, Dietrich. "Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gaines?" In *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds., edited by James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Rostow, Walt W. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960)

Rustow, Dankwart A. "Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model." In *Transitions to Democracy*, ed., Lisa Anderson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Sayyid, Bobby S. *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism.* London: Zed Books Ltd., 1997.

Sazgara, Mohsen. "What should 'We' do Now?" *Journal of Democracy* 16, no.4 (2005): 64-73.

Schedler, Andreas. "How Should We Study Democratic Consolidation?" *Democratization* (1998) 5 No. 4: 1-19

Schedler, Andreas. "What is Democratic Consolidation?" *Journal of Democracy*, (1998) 9 No. 2: 91-107

Schirazi, Asghar. *The Constitution of Iran: Politics and the State in the Islamic Republic*, translated by. John O'Kane. London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997.

Schulze, Richard. "Is there an Islamic Modernity?" In *The Islamic World and the West: An Introduction to Political Cultures and International Relations*, ed, Kai Hafez. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000.

Schumpeter, Joseph. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976.

Shain, Yossi and Juan L. Linz. "Provisional governments: revolutionaries and moderates." In *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions*, eds., edited by Yossi Shain and Juan J. Linz. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Shin, Doh C. "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research." *World Politics* 47 (1994) no. 1:135-170.

Skocpol, Theda. "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research." In *Bringing the State Back In*, eds., edited by P.B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Skocpol, Theda. "Cultural Idioms and Political Ideologies in the Revolutionary Reconstruction of State Power: A Rejoinder to Sewell." *Journal of Modern History* 57 (1985).

Skocpol, Theda. "Rentier state and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution." In Theda Skocpol, ed., *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Skocpol, Theda, ed. *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Skocpol, Theda. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comprehensive Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979

Selbin, Eric. *Modern Latin American Revolutions*. Boulder, CO: Westview,1993.

Sewell, William Jr. "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case." *Journal of Modern History* 57 (1985):57-85.

Siavoshi, Sussan. *Liberal Nationalism in Iran: The Failure of a Movement*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1990.

Sick, Gary "The Axis of Evil: Origins and Policy Implications." *Middle East Economic Survey* 45, no. 14 (April 8, 2002).

Sick, Gary "The Clouded Mirror: The United States and Iran, 1979-1999." In *Iran at the Crossroads*, eds., edited by John L. Esposito and R.K. Ramazani. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Silitski, Vitali. "Preempting Democracy: The Case of Belarus." *Journal of Democracy* 16.4 (2005): 83-97.

Snyder, Richard. "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives." In *Sultanistic Regimes*, eds., edited by H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz. Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Soroush, Abdolkarim. *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam*, edited and translated by Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Steinmetz, George. *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Stepan, Alfred. *Arguing comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Stepan, Alfred. "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations'." *Journal of Democracy* 11 (4), pp. 37-57.

Stepan, Alfred. "Paths toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations." In *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, eds., edited by G. O'Donnell and P. Schmitter. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Swidler, Ann. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986).

Tatu, Vanhanen. *Prospects of Democracy: A Study of 172 Countries*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Taylor, Michael. "Structure, culture, and action in the explanation of social change." In *Politics and Rationality*, eds., edited by William Booth et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Tilly, Charles. European Revolution: 1492-1992. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.

Tilly, Charles. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978.

Tilly, Charles, *Social Movements 1768-2004*. Boulder: Paradigm Publisher, 2004.

Tilly, Charles. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In *Bringing the State Back In*, eds., edited by P.B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

The Middle East and North Africa, 1976-1977.

Thompson, Kenneth ed. *Readings from Emile Durkheim*. Chichester: Ellis Harwood, 1985.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.

Vahdat, Farzin. *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Modernity*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002.

Vanhanen, Tatu. *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States, 1980-88*. New York: Crane Russak, 1990.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. "The Present State of the Debate on World Inequality." In M.A. Seligson and J. T. Passe-Smith, eds., *Development and Underdevelopment*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993, 217-230.

Walzer, Michael. "A Credo for This Moment." *Dissent* 37 (Spring 1990): no. 2.

Weber, Max. *Economy and Society* 3 vols., eds., edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, translated by Ephraim Fischoff et al. New York: Bedminster Press, 1968.

Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds., edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Weber, Max. *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*, edited by H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.

Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. and trans. by H.H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.

Young, Iris Marion. "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib ed., *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 120-135.

Young, Iris Marion. "State, Civil Society and Social Justice." In *Democracy's Value*, eds., edited by I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Zahedi, Dariush. *The Iranian Revolution, Then and Now: Indicators of Regime Instability.* Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.

Zubaida, Sami. "Is Iran an Islamic State?" In *Political Islam: Essays From Middle East Report*, eds. edited by Joel Beinin and Joe Stork. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

**Reports, Newspapers and other Media (English)**

Abu Zeid, Nasr Hamed. "Heaven, Which Way?" *ALAhram* 12-18 September 2002.

*Al-Hayat*, 11 Feb. 1997.

Ash, Timothy Garton. "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam." *New York Times*, October 2005, available from <http://www.nybooks.com/contents/20051103>

Behn, Sharon. "Pentagon Officials Meet with Regime Foe." *Washington Times*, June 4, 2003.

BBC SWB (ME/2842 MED/17, 3 Feb. 1997; ME/2917 MED/11, 13 May 1997; ME/3210 MED/2, 9 Jan. 1998; MEW/0543 WME/5, 23 June 1998; ME/3274 MED/3, 9 July 1998; ME/3298 MED/4-11, 6 Aug. 1998; ME/3318 MED/17, 29 Aug. 1998; ME/3344 MED/14, 29 Sep. 1998.)

Castaneda, Jorge G. "Two Roads Await Mexico's Next Chief." *New York Times*, 8 October 1987.

CNN. "Interview with President Khatami." January 8, 1998.

*Economist*. (January 16, 2003; 25 September 1998).

Fallaci, Oriana. "An Interview with Khomeini." *New York Times*, October 7, 1979.

Fallaci, Oriana. Interview with Ayatollah Khomeini. *The New York Times Magazine*, October 28, 1979.

Habermas, Jurgen. "Religion in the public sphere." *Lecture presented at the Holberg Prize Seminar* 29 November 2005.

International Monetary Fund. *Staff Report on Ira*n. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2003.

Ignatieff, Michael. "Iranian Lessons." *New York Times Magazine*, July 17, 2005.

*Iran Times*. Tehran: 23 August 1994.

Mashayekhi, Mehrdad. "A new era for Iran's democracy." *Open Democracy* 16 - 6 – 2005. <www.opendemocracy.com>

Mehrdad, Ardeshir and Mehdi Kia. "Iran's Crisis: New-conservatives, regime crisis and political perspectives in Iran." *Iran bulletin*, August 15, 2005.

Office of the Spokesman. June 18, 1998, U.S. Department of States.

Sachs, Susan. "Many Iranian Conservatives Lose Seats." *New York Times*. 23 February 2000, A10.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. "Address on Iran," *Iran Times*, March 24, 2000.

*The New York Times Magazine*. October 28, 1979, p.65

The *Times*. 22 October 1951.

World Bank, "Iran: Medium Term Framework for Transition – Converting Oil Wealth to Development," *Report No. 25848-IRN, A Country Economic Memorandum*, Social and Economic Development Group (Washington: April 30, 2003).

Yazdi, Ayatollah Mohammad. *Iran Times*. Tehran: May 25, 2001.

# VITA

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name:** | Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi |

**Post-secondary
Education and Degrees:**

Azad University
Isfahan, Iran
1990-1994 B.A.

University of Pune
Pune (Poona), India
1994-1996 M.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2000-2001 M.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2001-2006 Ph.D.

**Honours and Awards:**

Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship
2002-2003

**Related Work Experience:**

Instructor
The University of Western Ontario
Winter 2006, Fall 2003

Instructor
Wilfrid Laurier University
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
2004-2005

Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2000-2005

**Publications:**

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2006). Rethinking Agency
and Structures in the Study of Democratic
Transition: Iranian Lessons. Presented at the
Annual Conference of Canadian Political Science
Association, York University, Toronto, ON
<http://www.cpsa-csp.ca/papers2006/Mahdavi.pdf>

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2005). Max Webber in Iran: Does Islamic Protestantism Matter? Presented at the Annual Conference of Canadian Political Science Association, London ON, Canada <www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2005/Mahdavi.pdf>

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2005). Beyond Culturalism and Monism: The Iranian Path to Democracy. Iran Analysis Quarterly, 2 (3), 1-12

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2004). Muslim's Forces of the 1979 Iranian Revolution: A Critique of Cultural Essentialism. Transdisciplinary Journal of Emergence, 3 (2), 12-25

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2004). Revolutionary Reform in Iran: A comparative study of Reform Movements under Mosaddeq and Khatami. *Shargh* Daily Newspaper, Tehran, Iran

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2003). Revolutionary Reform: The case of socio-political change under Mosaddeq. Iran Analysis Quarterly, 1 (2), 12-25

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2003). Dialectics of Structure and Agency: The Case of 1979 Iranian Revolution. Iran Analysis Quarterly, 1 (1), 19-32

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2002). Iran: An Inquiry into the Classical and New-Radicalism. Bonyad-e Shariati ed., Rebellion Phoenix Tehran: Nashre Ghasideh, 237-265

**Selected Conference Presentation:**

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2004). On the Failure of 'Knocker' Culturalists and 'Booster' Universalists: An Alternative Path to Democracy in the Muslim World, presented at the Middle Eastern Society in North America (MESA), San Francisco, CA

Mojtaba S. A. Mahdavi (2004). Beyond Culturalism and Monism: The Iranian Path to Democracy, presented at the Fifth Biennial Conference on Iranian Studies (ISIS), Bethesda